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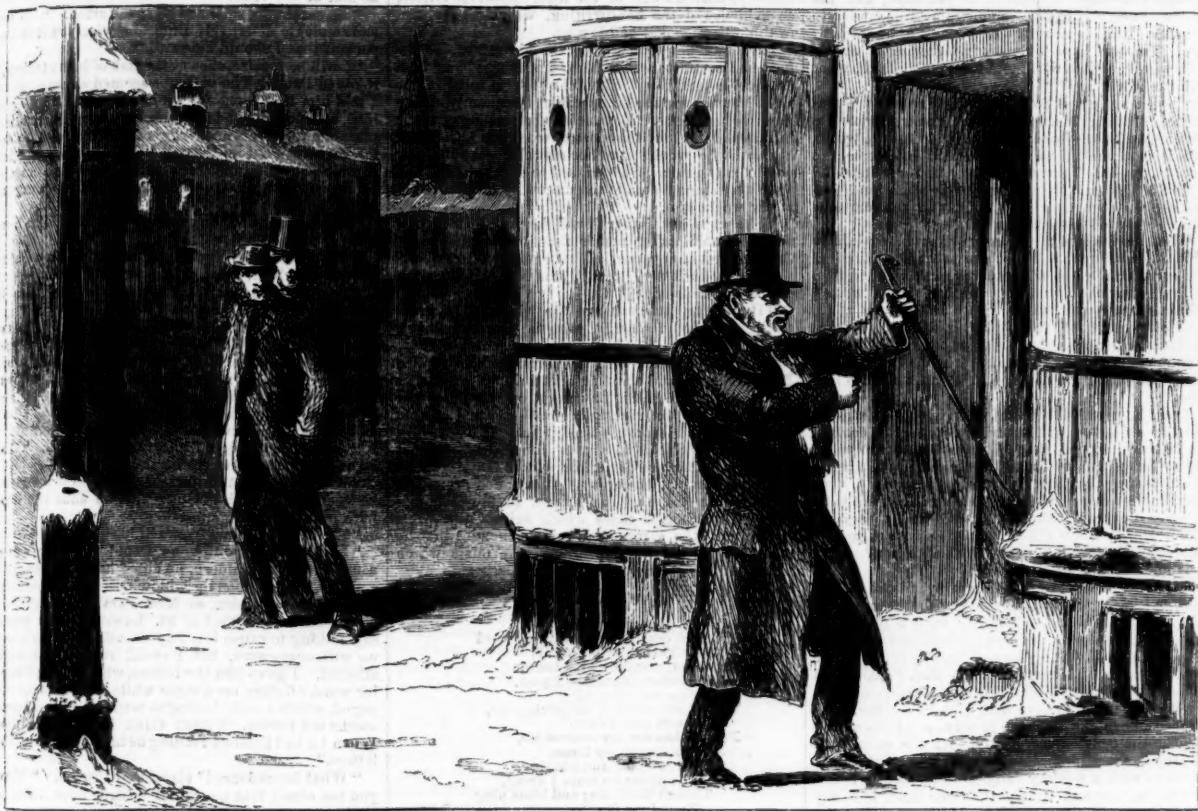
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[THE MAN-HUNTER ON THE TRACK.]

SCARLET BERRIES.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

CHAPTER IV.

He made obeisance with a free
Yet studied air of courtesy.
Each look and accent, framed to please,
Seemed to affect a playful ease;
His face was of that doubtful kind,
That wins the eye, but not the mind;
Yet harsh it seemed to deem amiss
Of brow so young and smooth as this.
His was the subtle look and sly,
That, spying all, seems nought to spy.

Scott.

THE weather was distressingly cold, and although there was a bright and cheerful fire burning in the grate, and the room was warm and comfortable, Horton drew his chair close to the fire, involuntarily, as it were, while he bent his eager gaze over the printed pages before him. His limbs were cold, he had been out in the frosty air, and his numbed fingers sought the blaze as the needle gravitates towards the pole.

There was an absorbing interest for Cyrus Horton in everything relating to the crime which had been committed at Fulham, and he read the short paragraph relating to it with the utmost care. The evening paper merely stated that it had received information of a dreadful and mysterious crime which had been discovered at Fulham, shocking a quiet and respectable, if poor, neighbourhood.

The victim was an aged widow named Owen, who had gained the respect of her neighbours. She was found dead in her kitchen, and it was believed that the police were on the track of the assassin, Detective Bone, of Scotland Yard, having started in pursuit of a man wearing corduroys, who was strongly suspected. The man-hunter smiled grimly and chuckled to himself at the concluding sentence of this account, which related to Bone. He was confident that he was on a false scent, though he was following it with all the eagerness of a dog who has the smell of

the game breast-high. But what perplexed Mr. Cyrus Horton was simply this: The paragraph respecting the Fulham murder was the only noteworthy piece of news in the entire paper. Of this he satisfied himself by carefully looking through its pages.

It was this which had affected Mrs. Fanthorpe, and caused her sudden illness. Why should this be so? What was the widow Owen to her? Those questions could only be answered if Paul chose to speak, and Horton had a difficult task before him. His object was, above all things, to get information respecting the Fulham crime, but he would not have Paul or Mrs. Fanthorpe know that he was connected with the police for untold gold. They would shut their doors against him, which would break his heart almost, as he loved Paul as much as if he had been his own son, and the loss of his pleasant evenings in Mrs. Fanthorpe's drawing-room would be a severe deprivation to him, for he had been accustomed to use the apartment as if it were his own, and at Cyrus Horton's age habit becomes second nature.

While he was warming his trembling fingers at the fire, and urging his busy brain to work out the problem which occupied its attention to the exclusion of everything else, Paul Fanthorpe entered the room, looking pale and harassed, which was easily accounted for by the illness of his mother. Horton considered Paul an excellent son, and had frequently admired his love and solicitude for his only relation. In her turn, she was equally fond of him, and their mutual affection was a most agreeable study for those who like to watch the emotions of the human heart. Paul appeared a little surprised to see Mr. Horton, for the servant, as requested, had not announced his arrival. He shook him by the hand, however, and in reply to his question respecting his mother's state of health, he said that Mrs. Fanthorpe was going on as well as could be expected.

"Mrs. Fanthorpe?" repeated Mr. Horton, in surprise. "How long is it since you have chosen to speak in such cold terms of your best friend? But something has occurred to upset you. I can see that. Sit down, my boy, and if you think fit, explain it all to me."

Making a great effort to appear calm, Paul Fanthorpe strode up and down the room, and then, leaning his back against the mantel-piece, was silent for perhaps half a minute, as if he were debating in his mind the advisability of making Mr. Horton his confidant. At length he spoke, and his reply gave his auditor the most lively satisfaction, for without beating about the bush, he plunged at once into the middle of the matter which engrossed all the thoughts of the amateur detective.

"Mrs. Fanthorpe," said Paul, "was thrown into a terrible state of excitement through seeing an account in a copy of the paper which is lying at your feet of the murder of a widow at Fulham."

It was with difficulty that Mr. Horton contained himself, but he said, in a calm voice, though he turned his head half round to hide his face in the shadow, so that the satisfaction gleaming from it might pass unnoticed:

"Did your mother know the widow Owen? that is her name, I think. I have, like yourself, just seen the account of the sad affair in the papers. If so, you too must have been acquainted with the poor creature."

"Mrs. Owen was devoted to us, and we had known her for many years," replied Paul. "She would have done anything for us. I have not seen her for some time, but I knew her well, and had a great regard for her, which she did all she could to deserve, for she was my nurse."

Cyrus Horton allowed himself to fall back more into the shadow, out of which he could peer into the sad, earnest face of his young friend, which was usually so inscrutable, and which now bore the traces of inward concern and suffering. Assuredly Providence was working in a most mysterious way for the man-hunter, who had discovered a trail which he had not expected to find in such a quarter.

Afraid to betray his anxiety to know everything connected with Paul Fanthorpe's acquaintance, or intimacy, as he alleged it to be, with the widow Owen, Horton contented himself with a commonplace observation of mingled sympathy for the victim of the assassin and her friends, and profound horror at the crime itself.

"I don't know that it matters so much to Mrs. Fanthorpe," exclaimed Paul hurriedly; "but to me the event is a great misfortune, and will tell you why. You are my oldest, I may almost say my only friend, Mr. Horton, and I will confide in you. The death of the widow Owen causes me the utmost embarrassment, and, indeed, threatens to ruin me. The blow that struck her shattered all my hopes, and dashed down to the dust my legitimate aspirations. I have wrongs to avenge, a position to establish, and the widow Owen was the one upon whom I depended to help me. I am going to tell you an extraordinary tale. You will have difficulty in believing it, and if you, who know me well, doubt my good faith, what will the world say?"

"My dear, good boy," quickly answered Cyrus Horton, stifling his impatience, "you cannot do better than let me know all. I am a man of the world, and if you and I together cannot overcome the trouble you dread, yours must be a bad case indeed."

Paul looked suspiciously round the room, and perceiving that the door was shut, and the curtains closely drawn, began his recital by saying:

"You have heard me speak coldly and disdainfully of Mrs. Fanthorpe, and you are astonished at what you consider a want of filial respect; wonder then no longer, for she is not my mother, but a woman who has lent herself to a vile scheme to rob a child of what should rightly be his as ever troubled the imagination of a romantic, or astounded the frequenters of a court of justice. She has robbed me of a grand historical name, and of an immense fortune."

Again he paced the room with impatient strides, and the shade on his lowering brow grew darker. His listener, fearful that he would speak no more, and so leave his revelation incomplete, urged him on by suggesting that Mrs. Fanthorpe must be a very remarkable woman indeed, if she could commit such villainies unaided. She must have had an accomplice. Did he know the name of this second person who had been plotting against his happiness? Perhaps her husband assisted her?

"She has no husband. She never had one," cried Paul, halting again, and speaking with the same rapidity. "My father deceived her with a false marriage. I have discovered everything by chance. In a desk, which she one day accidentally left open, I found a bundle of letters. This is Mrs. Fanthorpe's history and mine, as disclosed in that correspondence:

"My father fell in love with Mrs. Fanthorpe. He induced his valet, Garnham, to personate a priest, and perform the marriage ceremony. At the same time his friends forced him into an unwelcome but actual marriage with a wealthy lady of rank. Both ladies became mothers at nearly the same time, and my father, loving the infant of his love better than the offspring of his marriage of convenience, determined to have the children changed ere they were a week old. This was done, as the letters conclusively prove. I am the legitimate offspring of my father, but the child born to Mrs. Fanthorpe is the victim of a false marriage. The natural son, the illegitimate child, has usurped my position, and is now the spoilt and wealthy pet of the best society in London, while I am a poor, struggling nobody, working hard for my living, and gaining just enough to live in a respectable manner by the exercise of the utmost frugality."

Cyrus Horton sat silent in his arm-chair, stretching out his hands towards the fire, pretending to be only moderately interested in the disclosure with which he was favoured, though in reality he was burning with curiosity in his face, and his eyes expressed a restless longing to hear more.

Going to a bureau which stood in a corner of the room, Paul unlocked it, and took from a drawer a packet of letters discoloured with age, and tied with a piece of red tape. He selected a few from the heap, which he gave to Mr. Horton, saying meanwhile:

"These will prove the truth of what I have said to you. Mrs. Fanthorpe received a large sum of money from my father for keeping the secret, and to console her for the fraud of which she had been made the victim. For money she gave up her child, who is now in the position which I ought to hold. The widow Owen was cognisant of the whole transaction, for she was my nurse, and with Garnham, the valet, effected the changing of the children almost at their birth. Garnham is dead. Mrs. Fanthorpe, in spite of my solicitations, refused to help me to gain my rights, and it was to the widow Owen I looked to help me to vindicate my position. Now can you wonder, old friend, at my concern at the awful death which has overtaken her? She could have assisted me to a fortune and a title, but she is dead, and I have to fight my battle unaided."

Mr. Horton took the letters which the young barrister gave him, without making any remark, and adjusting his spectacles, began to read. The letters were not signed in full. They were merely initialed.

The writing was that of a well-educated gentleman, the language impassioned, and thoroughly bearing out all alleged by Paul.

The servant knocked lightly at the door, and informed Paul that Mrs. Fanthorpe was much worse. Would he come to see her? Excusing himself to Cyrus Horton for a few minutes, he left the room, and the amateur detective completed the perusal of the correspondence during his absence, and contrived to abstract one of the least important letters, as evidence of the handwriting, which he secreted in the breast-pocket of his coat.

Paul was not long gone. On his return, he informed Mr. Horton that Mrs. Fanthorpe was in a deplorable condition. She did not seem to be in her right senses, for she accused him of committing the most awful crimes. He fancied she was going mad; and he had sent for the doctor, who was a friend of his, and who would give her singular case the best possible attention. She refused to speak, as she had done over since he made the discovery of the letters a few weeks ago.

"She says my father loved her, and it is best that I should suffer rather than he should endure the slightest annoyance. I have no hope from her."

Handing back the letters, Cyrus Horton said, with deliberate emphasis:

"It is clear that you are the victim of a cruel wrong, but the question is, who is your oppressor? These letters are only initialed."

"I have one here with the name in full," replied Paul, selecting and showing a letter. "My father is the wealthy Earl of St. Lawrence, and the man who enjoys the position rightfully mine—the son of Mrs. Fanthorpe—is Herbert, Viscount Langdale!"

At this declaration, Cyrus Horton was almost stupefied. The murder of the widow Owen was no longer a commonplace crime. It assumed grand and romantic dimensions. It promised to develop into one of those famous cases which agitate the whole world; and the astute man-hunter thought that he could already see faintly through the mists which enveloped the extraordinary affair.

CHAPTER V.

All hail! inexorable lord!
At whose destruction-breathing word
The mightiest empires fall!
The cruel, woe-delighted train,
The minister of grief and pain,
A sullen welcome, all i
With stern-resolv'd, despairing eye,
I see each aimed dart;
For one has cut my dearest tie,
And quivers in my heart.
Then low ring and pouring,
The storm no more I dread,
Though thick'ning and black'ning
Round my devoted head. Burns.

ROUSING himself from the reverie into which the strange revelations to which he had listened had temporarily plunged him, Cyrus Horton asked:

"What steps have you taken in this matter, my boy?"

"Those of which I think you will approve," replied Paul. "As you may imagine, I have scarcely been able to sleep since the discovery of the letters; my secret was too oppressive to be kept, and when I found that Mrs. Fanthorpe would not assist me to get my own, I resolved to call upon the Earl of St. Lawrence, and see what justice he was prepared to mete out to me."

Cyrus Horton started. Here was a new complication. The Fulham mystery became more interesting and involved in its intricacy every moment.

"Do I understand that you have had an interview with the earl, whom you have every reason to believe your father?" said he.

"No," replied Paul; "I called at the family mansion in Piccadilly on Monday. The earl was out of town, and I requested permission to see Viscount Langdale, who was at home, and who, on receipt of my card, asked me to walk into his private study and smoking-room, which I did. On my way through the magnificent mansion in which my father lives, I met numerous domestics in gorgeous liveries, and signs of prodigious wealth encountered me on every side. There were paintings by the best masters, sculptures that Canova might have envied, and around all was that indescribable air of luxury which envelopes the rich and great and those who, in purple and fine linen, enjoy the good things of this life."

"You had the letters with you?" hazarded Mr. Horton.

"Certainly. What could I have done without them? I should have been regarded as an impostor, or a dangerous lunatic. I am not sure that I am not considered one or the other now. Langdale was lying on a sofa smoking when I entered his private apartment, which partly resembled a tobacconist's shop; there were so many boxes of cigars and pipes about; partly a fencing school, on account of the number of pistols, swords, foils, boxing-gloves, etc., which hung

on the walls; and partly a library, from the shelves of books which ornamented one side of the room.

"Langdale is about my height, handsome and noble. He seems worthy of the name which does not belong to him. He appears younger than me. This I can explain: he has not worked and suffered as I have; life has been to him one long, pleasant dream. He rose politely on seeing me, and asked what fortunate circumstance had procured him the honour of my visit?"

"Be careful," exclaimed Cyrus Horton. "Do not omit a single detail. If I am to advise you it is important that I should know all."

"I will be precise, even at the risk of being tedious," rejoined Paul. "The viscount seemed annoyed when I told him that I should probably detain him some time, and, looking at his watch, asked me if I could not postpone the interview. This I flatly refused to do, for I was worked up to such a pitch that I could not contain myself any longer. He said he had an appointment with a lady, which he should be sorry to break."

"Did he mention any name?" inquired Mr. Horton.

"Yes," answered Paul, "that of Lady Laura Pangbourne, to whom, he added, he was engaged."

"Good," muttered the man-hunter. "There is another woman in the case."

"In order to induce him to devote himself to me for the next hour, at least," continued Paul, "I produced the letters, and, on seeing his father's handwriting, which he recognised and admitted without demur, he sent a message by a valet to the Countess of Corrington's—that is the name of Lady Laura's mother—and declared himself at my service."

"Allow me one word," interrupted Horton. "Was he at all concerned at seeing the letters?"

"Apparently, not in the least. When the servant had gone away with his message, he shut the door with his own hands, and said:

"Now, sir, explain yourself."

"I told him, as politely as I could, that he was a usurper, that, as children, he and I had been changed, and that I relied upon the widow Owen to enable me to vindicate my position, as Mrs. Fanthorpe still loved or revered the Earl of St. Lawrence, and would say nothing to cause him any uneasiness. He heard me with composure, but I could see he was much affected. I gave him the letters, which he read word for word, offering me a cigar while he was thus engaged, which I took, feeling in want of something to soothe my nerves. I don't think he missed a line. When he had finished reading he handed me back the letters."

"What imprudence!" ejaculated Horton. "Were you not afraid that he would destroy such valuable evidence against him?"

"Yes," answered Paul; "but I kept my eye fixed firmly upon him, and I was prepared to spring like a tiger at his throat if he had made the slightest movement towards the fire-place, from which he was some paces distant. I watched him like a lynx. Big drops of perspiration gathered upon his forehead. His face became pale, but beyond that, and a strange brilliancy in his eyes, I observed nothing. He did not utter an exclamation or make a gesture, and he seemed so convinced of the truth of my story, and so prostrated, that I had an inclination to burn the letters and endeavour to be content with my present subordinate position. At all events, he is my brother—we are the sons of the same father."

"Who shall say what was passing in his mind?" exclaimed the man-hunter, reflectively. "The thought did you credit, but I am glad you did not yield to it. Go on, I beg of you. I cannot tell you how strangely your story interests me."

"Viscount Langdale finished reading the letters and told me that if they were really written by my father—and he saw no reason to doubt the fact—I was actually the son of the Earl St. Lawrence, but he should like me to wait a fortnight before I took any steps. Garnham, the valet, was dead, but he should think the widow Owen would be an important witness for me."

"He said that, did he?" answered Horton, sharply.

"He did; and presently, his recollection serving him, he told me that he remembered her. His father had taken him to see the old woman at Fulham, on which occasion the earl had given her money. He knew where she lived, and thought her a worthy creature. He asked me to excuse him if he was in any way wanting in courtesy, the fact being that he was much upset. If my story were true, he lost everything, and gained, it was undeniable, a mother. In conclusion, he assured me that he would lay the whole affair before the earl on his return, which he expected in a day or two, and if my case was clear he would gladly give up everything in my favour."

"The hypocrite!" muttered Horton, adding aloud: "He behaved like a fine fellow. May I ask what you did?"

"What could I do? I agreed to wait, and have waited. Langdale has my address, and I am anxiously expecting a communication from him."

"I hope everything will go well for you," said Horton. "But you must let me sleep over all this. I cannot give you advice off-hand. You are very much to be pitied."

"I have trouble here," replied Paul, "and, added to that, I am pressed for money. I am in debt, and—"

"That is easily remedied," exclaimed Mr. Horton. "I have a couple of thousand pounds in notes downstairs. They are at your service. Do not hesitate. I have no use for them, and shall esteem it a favour if you will have the goodness to borrow the money and pay me the Bank rate of interest for it."

To prevent any further refusal on the part of Paul, Horton immediately went to his own apartment and brought the money, which the young advocate accepted with apparent reluctance.

"And now good night," said the man-hunter, shaking Paul by the hand. "Sleep soundly: who knows that Providence is not working in the dark for you—for us? Hope for the best! You are a noble-hearted fellow, and will soon, I trust, be Viscount Langdale."

Paul smiled in a despondent manner, returned a like pressure of the hand which the old man gave him, and opened the door for him to pass out.

When Cyrus Horton regained his own apartment, he put on his hat and coat, and sallied forth into the street, saying to himself:

"I must go out. I should have a horrid nightmare if I went to sleep at present. The case seems plain to me, but I must not act with precipitancy. However, if I am not much mistaken, it will be a dismal Christmas Day for the present Viscount Langdale. The arrival of officers with a warrant for his arrest, on the charge of murder, will spoil his Christmas dinner. Ha! ha!"

And the old man rubbed his hands with glee as he walked slowly along the almost deserted street. The snow had ceased falling, but it lay in large quantities on the ground, and his feet sank in at every step he took nearly over his ankles.

The man-hunter was indeed on the trail, and he fancied he saw his prey in his grasp.

"Oh!" he cried aloud, heedless of the passers-by, who regarded him as a lunatic, "there is no such sport in the world as that of man-hunting. I have him! I have him! And that poor fool, Bone, is after the man with the corduroys!"

At this reflection he laughed with infinite zest, and kicked the snow about sportively like a child at play.

Scarcely had Cyrus Horton quitted the drawing-room when Dr. Cooper was announced. He was an old friend of Paul's. They had been educated together at the same University, and when the doctor came in he expressed his sorrow at hearing of Mrs. Fanthorpe's illness.

"Go in and see her," said Paul, "and do your best for her. She has received a great shock to the nerves. I will not explain the cause just now, because time is precious, and family history not very entertaining to outsiders. She is delirious, and you must not attach any importance to whatever she says."

"Very well," replied Doctor Cooper, who was straightway ushered into the bed-room of the sick woman.

Paul waited until he came out, which he did in about a quarter of an hour. His face was grave, and he looked at Paul curiously.

"She must be raving," he exclaimed. "For she makes such grave charges against you, and mixes your name up with that of a widow Owen. I don't know what to make of the case. It is the strangest I ever met with."

Paul smiled, and replied:

"It is indeed a strange case. Do your best for her, Cooper. She is very dear to me."

The doctor cast his eye upon the table, on which he saw a white powder in a saucer. He instinctively put his finger on it, and raised it to his lips.

"Arsenic," said he, shortly.

"Yes," answered Paul, with an air of unconcern.

"For killing rats."

"Well, good night. I will send some medicine, and you must engage some one to sit up with Mrs. Fanthorpe. She must be carefully nursed."

"I will watch her myself. Do not fear," rejoined Paul, holding a candle, and showing his friend out of the house. When the front door closed his face wore an expression of relief, and he went back again to the bedroom of the sick woman, which the doctor had so recently left, but it was noticeable that he stopped in the drawing-room and took up the saucer containing the poison which was intended to kill the rats; his face was grave, and it was evident that he was oppressed with care.

CHAPTER VI.

O Lady, twine no wreath for me,
Or twine it of the cypress-tree!
Too lively glow the lilies light,
The varnished holly's all too bright,
The May-flower and the eglantine
May shade a brow less sad than mine;
But, Lady, weave no wreath for me,
Or weave it of the cypress-tree!

—Rokey.

VISCOUNT LANGDALE was of a mercurial disposition, but the settled melancholy which had taken possession of him for several days pursued him, and, do what he could, he was unable to rise superior to it, even on Christmas Day.

He had received an invitation to dine at the Countess of Corrington's, which he had accepted, but he would have given much to be able to excuse himself. Since the revelation made in the last chapter by Paul to the man-hunter, the reader can, with some difficulty, guess the cause of his disquiet. The news, which, day by day, ripened into absolute certainty, that he was not the rightful possessor of the title and patrimony which he enjoyed, had a depressing effect upon him, and caused him to shun the society of his friends.

He had resolved to consult his father—indeed, how could he do otherwise?—but he was especially desirous of postponing the unpleasant communication until Christmas Day was over. On that day his father received all the members of his family who lived in town, and gave them a magnificent banquet in the evening. Many poor members of the famous and noble house of St. Lawrence came up to town specially for the princely entertainment, which brought all the family together by a sort of natural attraction.

The earl was very good to all his relations. His influence with the Government of the day was great, and if he could place one of his own kith and kin in a vacant appointment, he would exert all his influence to do so, though the applicant for the office might only be a remote cousin, whom he had not seen more than once or twice in his life, or perhaps never seen at all.

Consequently, the gathering at Park House, Piccadilly, on Christmas Day, was a very grand affair. Lady Laura Pangbourne knew this, and had fixed her own dinner-hour, with her mother's consent, earlier on that day, so as to allow Langdale an opportunity of passing some time in her society without disappointing his father and his relations.

The Countess Corrington and Lady Laura always went to church on the morning of Christmas Day, for they considered it one of the most solemn, as well as one of the most joyful, festivals of the Christian year. On their return home from the sacred edifice, which was not until past one o'clock, they found Viscount Langdale.

Going upstairs to change her furs for something less warm in the house, the countess left the lovers together. Laura's quick eyes at once detected an alteration in Langdale's manner. She had not seen him for several days, but the change was so complete that she could not fail to perceive it, and she promptly taxed him with it.

"Are you ill, Herbert?" she said. "Pray tell me why you seem so changed and so downcast. See," she added, holding up a bunch of holly covered with scarlet berries, "I have a present for you. Where and how do you think I got it? You strictly enjoined me not to purchase anything for you, and I had no time to make anything; besides, I am so stupid and useless with my needle. Well, you shall hear. I was out driving in my pony-chaise yesterday morning early, and the snow coming on suddenly, made me lose my way in Fulham. Goodness only knows where I got to. I was completely lost in some small lane, and my groom got down near a solitary cottage to ask the way. He knocked at the door, and no one answered. I suppose the inmates were from home, enjoying a holiday. The house was called Holly Cottage, and a splendid holly bush grew in the garden. Perhaps it took its name from that. The scarlet berries were so fine that I told the man to break off a branch. Here it is, and for you. It is my present, my votive offering at the shrine my heart worships at; but, one word—you must not tell anyone where you got it from. Promise me that?"

"Yes, dear," replied the viscount, laconically.

"How coldly you answer me," she said, pouting her pretty red lips. "You do not evince any curiosity to know why I exact this promise, but I will tell you. Lord Septerry asked me for those very berries yesterday, and mamma, who likes him, told me to send them to his house; but I had intended them for you, dearest, and to save them, I told a story, and said the wind had blown them out of the window. If mamma or Lord Septerry heard that I had deceived them I should die of shame. But speak to me, my own. Tell me why you are so dull?"

Viscount Langdale strove to conjure up a smile, but it was the ghost of one which came to his lips, and, giving up the attempt to be gay, he appeared to

undergo an inward struggle, the result of which was soon evident.

The scarlet berries he kissed affectionately, and placed in a button-hole of his coat. Then he exclaimed:

"I have had terrible news, Laura—news that has nearly driven me mad! I am not the legitimate son of Earl St. Lawrence, and the man who is has given me convincing proofs that I am but a miserable usurper. What can I do? Should I, as an honest man, know a moment's peace if I were to keep the rightful heir out of his own?"

Then he told Lady Laura circumstantially all that Paul had told him, and announced his intention of begging a small pension from the earl until he could learn a profession by means of which he could get his own living.

Laura looked at him with admiration, and exclaimed:

"Oh, how truly noble you appear in my eyes now! Before this, I valued you very highly, and esteemed myself fortunate in having gained your love; now you are beyond all price; but I am at a loss to know why you should be so dejected. Does wealth bring happiness? Are sumptuous palaces free from trouble and care? Have you not had sorrows, and has not your very position entailed upon you worries innumerable, from which the poorer man is exempt? Do not tarnish the nobility of your character, Herbert, by a base request for money, which, after all, is the true vexation of spirit and utter vanity spoken of by the wisest of men."

The young man's countenance brightened, and with more vivacity than he had yet exhibited, he replied:

"It is not the loss of wealth or position, dear Laura, which grieves me. It is a fear that I shall lose your love, and that you will consider me no more worthy of your hand."

The mortification which this speech caused Lady Laura was observable in her face, as she made answer:

"I will not believe that you can think me so mercenary. I have assured you that I return your love, and no event, however unfortunate, would make me swerve from my pledged faith. Poor or rich, Herbert, I am yours—yours for ever!"

"Dear girl!" he cried, clasping her in his arms. "You have taken a great weight from my mind, and I am prepared to meet the hardest lot which fate can deal out to me. Your affection is indeed inestimable, but have you fully considered what you propose to do? I shall not only be poor, but nameless. A shameful mist obscures my birth. Will your mother permit such a *médiocre*?"

"I have thought of all that, Herbert," she replied, "and I am content to risk all, even my mother's displeasure! What care I for name, position, wealth, so long as I have you?"

He bent down and kissed her tenderly. His agitation was still perceptible, but the melancholy which roused the concern of his betrothed had vanished like a summer cloud, and his face was wreathed with smiles. He informed her that his father had given his consent to their marriage, but that mattered little now. When made acquainted with all that had taken place, he would, in common fairness, be obliged to take his lawful son by the hand. Paul would be Viscount Langdale, and it would matter little to anyone what the obscure Herbert did when reduced to poverty.

Suddenly his face again clouded.

"Is it right, my darling one," he exclaimed, "for me to drag you down in my ruin? You have every comfort which befits your rank. I cannot reconcile such a step to my conscience. Strive to forget me. Let me sink under the surface, and join the army of those who work. I am no longer one of those who toil not, and —"

"Hush, Herbert!" interrupted Lady Laura, with impressive dignity. "If you reject me, you will condemn me to death, for I could not live without you."

He could make no further objection, and they sat in happy communion until the Countess of Corrington descended to the drawing-room, and the dinner was announced.

The party was strictly a private one. It consisted of themselves; and, though less gay than usual, Viscount Langdale was far happier than he had been since the fatal day when Paul had told him of the cruel wrong of which they had both been the victims, and for which it was now his turn to suffer.

The room was gaily decorated with mistletoe and evergreens, and, though the ground was covered with snow, comfort, peace, and contentment reigned within.

(To be continued.)

A RUSSIAN engineer has run a railway train successfully from Charif to Kutschagan, a distance of 536 miles, the only fuel used being raw commercial naphtha.



[GENIFREDE'S LETTER.]

CLINTON DEERWOOD.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN the bandages were removed from the eyes of the Lady Genifrede, and the others who had gained, with her, admittance to the home of the outlaw, they found themselves in a large circular room, whose sides and roof were of solid rock, but which were hung with many-coloured silken draperies. The apartment was not lofty, but still of sufficient height to permit a tall ceiling for breathing-room. It was of circular shape, and as we have said, draped at the sides with long, silken curtains, whose colours were scarlet, purple and gold. These were held back at intervals by heavy tassels and golden cord, and between these openings there were handsome pictures, such as suited a dining-hall—fruit-pieces, and noble stage, in the throes of agony from the hunter's fatal shot.

A long seat ranged round the hall invited to repose. It was covered with purple velvet, and was soft and luxurious enough for a king to rest his limbs upon. There were several chairs of damask and velvet, and in the centre of this room a long table was spread with a cloth of finest linen. Upon this were silver and golden dishes, and flasks of the heaviest and rarest workmanship, with jewelled edges, sparkling in the light which came from a hanging lamp, over this table. Evidently the meal was waiting the chief and his men; for from dishes of delicate china, there came the most appetising odour, which would have tempted an anchorite to forget his vows of fasting, and draw nigh the enticing board.

Upon a side table there were baskets filled with the most tempting fruits, luscious grapes, blushing peaches, mellow pears, yellow oranges, pineapples, and nectarines. Then there were flasks and decanters filled with sparkling wines, fresh from the vineyards of Spain and sunny Italy.

A dozen or more men were in this apartment, putting the finishing touches to the repast, when the others came in. These were such as had been detailed by Giles Fenlow to the duty before them. The outlaw chief had a well organised household, and each man knew and performed his duty, from love towards their chief, and not from fear. In his out-of-door occupations the chief had also his laws, which were always held in respect by his men; and thus it was that Giles Fenlow had, in the years of his withdrawal from the outer world, amassed the luxurious wealth which now surrounded him. To each man

he had given a share of the spoils they had taken from others, and all had contributed in fitting up his rocky cavern into a habitation suitable for a prince.

When the last of his band had entered the cave, Giles Fenlow removed the bandages from the eyes of his cousin, and at the same moment those who had guided Alfreta and Inez and her companion, performed the same office for them. Alfreta knew that 'twas Halbert who had led her in, and she now whispered her astonishment when he drew aside the handkerchief, and she gazed around the apartment in which she found herself.

"Oh, Halbert! why didst thou not tell me of all this splendour before, thou foolish fellow?" she asked quickly; and her lover replied, while a merry smile came over his features:

"Because, Alfreta, I was afraid thou wouldst be tempted to come hither before I was ready for thee, and then I should have been bothered with a woman's tongue and prying ways," he said, mischievously.

For this piece of impudence the lover was treated to a sly box on the ear by Alfreta. Then she turned away and sought her mistress. But Giles Fenlow seemed to have appropriated his cousin Genifrede, for he had spoken a few words to her in a low tone, and was now leading her from the others across the room. The Lady Genifrede turned to her maid, however, and said with a smile:

"Thou mayest come too, Alfreta, for I have need of thy help, as my cousin has offered to accompany me to a smaller and more secluded room, where I can rest and renew my toilette, after our journey through the forest. And, Alfreta, bid Inez to accompany us, for she looks fatigued, and in need of rest."

Alfreta turned and sought Inez, and delivered to her her mistress's message; and then the three followed Giles Fenlow across the dining-hall to a smaller apartment, which joined it at one end. The chief left them, with the remark that they need not return to the dining-hall again that morning, as he would see that a suitable repast should be sent to them in their room, to which he had conducted them.

When he had gone out our visitors looked about them to judge of their surroundings. The room in which they now found themselves was considerably smaller than that they had just left, but it was fitted up with greater taste and more lavish elegance. Like the other, its ceiling was the solid rock; but it appeared to be somewhere in the centre of the cavern, for there were no walls of stone to bind it on either side. Instead, there were draperies of blue and buff silk and velvet, massive and heavy, and shutting out all sounds from without. Over these there were lighter hangings of gossamer-like lace, fleecy and

white, and delicate as a cloud. A chandelier of gold and brilliants hung from the centre of the ceiling, and this held a lamp filled with perfumed oil, which emitted a mellow light over the fairy-like apartment.

There were some half-dozen couches or sofas scattered about the place, and several tables covered with ornaments and statuettes, and vases filled with beautiful and rare flowers. A flute lay upon a table of mosaic work, and a harp with golden cords leaned against the silken drapery near. The apartment looked the fitting abode of a princess, and the Lady Genifrede and her companions could not restrain their pleasure and surprise in finding themselves the only occupants after Giles Fenlow had left them.

Alfreta was the first to speak, however, for the girl was fully intoxicated with the richness of everything about them, and the novelty of every-

"Have we not fallen into a wonderful place, my lady? and how good and kind the Lord Giles is, to show us all these splendid things, and allow us to use them as much as we like!" exclaimed Alfreta, delighted at all she saw around her.

"I always knew that my kinsman possessed a noble spirit, in spite of the rash blow he struck my sire," returned the lady, who did not disdain to make a confidant of her discreet little maid, "and to tell the truth, I am as much overcome with the elegance of this place as thou art, for I had always fancied that brigands and outlaws led a stern life, and lived in barren, rocky caves."

"Oh, my lady! I knew that it was not all barren here, for Halbert had sometimes hinted of the nice things they enjoyed, but I wasn't ready to see such a splendid place. Why, our new home is grander than the Castle, my lady?" prattled the girl.

"Our new home," Alfreta?" repeated the Lady Genifrede, in a slightly chiding tone. "Surely, girl, to hear thee, one would imagine thy mistress had entered the outlaw's retreat to take up her abode in it!"

And the lady looked on her maid with a little dignity in her mien.

"Oh, no, my lady. Of course thou wilt not remain here a day longer than thou wishest, for the chief is so good and honest that he would not take any advantage of thyself; and when thou art ready to go, I am sure he will give thee a guard to the seaport, whence thou art to sail for that convent town in far-off France, where thou persistest in burying thyself, my dear lady."

And Alfreta looked sad enough at the thought of her mistress's probable departure.

At this juncture their companion looked interested, and lifting her head from the heap of cushions into

which she had sunk down fatigued, upon her entrance, said eagerly:

"Sweet lady, dost thou cross the water to 'La belle France?' Then, mayhap, our paths will lie together, if thou dost not disdain to journey in my poor company. France was the home of my nativity, and the stricken bird always loves to flee back to its own nest to die!" she said, with sadly drooping eyes and plaintive tone.

"Aye, let us go together, my poor girl," replied the Lady Genifreda, kindly. "It will shorten the journey to bear each other company; besides, woman ever loves companionship and sympathy. In the cloister of Ste. Marie I hope to escape being persecuted into a hateful marriage; and thou, too, dear girl, will be far happier there, in thy kind brother's care, than in this land. Now let us lay aside our sorrows, and refresh ourselves after our journey."

An hour later a servant came to ask if they would be served with breakfast then. And soon a most delicious and tempting meal was brought to them, which was partaken of with relish by all. After this there was an interval of repose, in which the two ladies and Alfretta lost consciousness in dreamland, and awoke to find themselves the occupants of this strange, yet beautiful apartment, in the heart of the outlaw's cavern.

While the ladies were conversing, there came another messenger to the door, and this time Inez was summoned to meet her brother, who had begun to grow anxious at her long delay. The lady was going out to speak with him, when Lady Genifreda, knowing who was the visitor, invited the dwarf to enter, and then spoke of her intention of accompanying him self and his visitor upon their journey, to the convent in Chalons, where, perhaps, Inez would join her.

But she quickly perceived that Pierre Clary did not appear overmuch pleased at the thought of his sister's burying herself in a convent; and he at once made his thoughts manifest by saying:

"I pray thee, lady, do not encourage my sister to the shelter of this convent, for it would break my heart were she to enter it, and I could never behold her again. Rather would I that she should remain for ever buried in this cavern of the outlaw chief, than that she should leave it to seek a home in St. Mary's Convent."

"And why not remain here in Giles Fenlow's home, where everything is beautiful as fairy-land? I have determined to take up my future abode here, and I counsel both your sister and my Lady Genifreda to do the same!" exclaimed Alfretta, with ready tongue.

"Art thou speaking the truth, girl, when thou sayest thou shalt remain here?" questioned the dwarf, as he turned eagerly towards Alfretta.

"For certain, I am, good sir; and I counsel thee, as well as thy lovely sister and my own sweet lady, to stay here with me. But perchance there are no such inducements offered to either of you, for I have a lover here, my noble Halbert, who is one of Giles Fenlow's chief men; and it is he that will repay me by his love, if I give up the world outside, and remain here with him in his cavern home," returned the girl, eager and willing to impart this information.

The dwarf sat silent for a period of time which seemed long to those interested in the conversation, then he turned to his adopted sister, and said:

"Inez, wilt thou stay with me, in the outlaw's home, and let the convent escape thy presence? Think of it seriously, my dear sister, and give me thy answer when next I come to thee, an hour hence!" and the man turned away and left the apartment.

An hour later there came a gentle tap at the curtained door of the room, and then the dwarfed body of Pierre presented itself. We have mentioned before that his head was shapely and his face noble. Now, the deep brown eyes were filled with anxious solicitude, for the man felt that much of his future happiness depended upon the reply to his proposition.

CHAPTER X.

On the day following the occurrences pourtrayed in our last chapter there was great consternation in Fenlow Castle.

Lord Allan sat unwontedly long in the breakfast-room, awaiting his daughter's morning appearance. There was a frown upon his brow as he sat over his untaught coffee, for Lord Allan could ill brook delay in anything; and this morning he was doubly impatient, because he wished to talk over the visit they had made on the previous day to Sir Clinton's princely mansion, over which, in imagination, the nobleman already saw his daughter installed as mistress.

Presently the servant sent to summon the Lady Genifreda returned, saying:

"My lady is not in her chamber, my lord. But here is a letter, found on her dressing-table, which

may perhaps explain the matter!" and he passed his master a sealed missive.

"A letter! But where is Alfretta? Surely she knows of her lady's movements," exclaimed Lord Allan, impatiently, as he received the sealed sheet.

"My lady's maid is not there, either, your lordship," was the reply.

Lord Allan broke the seal, with a vague fear at his heart. But his eye darkened as he read the contents.

"ounds! this is a bold move for a peer's daughter! 'Fled from her home?—prefers to take refuge in a convent, rather than be forced into a hated marriage with him whom she cannot love.' By our King! but this is a daring step! Ho! there, Wilson! Send Geoffrey to me!" cried Lord Allan, rising from his chair, with his face almost black with rage.

The man obeyed; and presently the confidential valet of his master made his appearance.

"List you, Geoffrey! Didst ever hear such a daring move? My daughter has fled away to escape this approaching marriage with Sir Clinton Deerwood! And what think you? She represents that the solitude of a nunery is better than to be wed to a man whom she doth not love. Upon her for a crazed, wilful baggage, who forgets the name she bears! We must bring her back, Geoffrey!" exclaimed the irate noble.

"Certainly, my master. But where shall we find her?" asked Geoffrey. "In what convent hath she taken refuge?"

"That passeth me," replied Lord Allan, his face growing cloudy. But at length his brow brightened, and he said:

"Of a truth, Genifreda knows nothing of nunneries save the stories she heard in her childhood of the Convent of St. Mary, at Chalons, in France, where her mother was educated. My daughter hath never set foot beyond England's shores; yet mayhap she hath now sought a refuge in this distant nunnery, where yet must be living the sisters who educated her dead mother. Aye! I dare swear, Geoffrey, that to Chalons the wilful girl will go, if we do not overtake her ere it be too late. Bestir thee, Geoffrey! and gather a dozen of my best men; and we will overtake this wild-headed girl ere she hath left our shores; and that pert Alfretta, too, who, I'll warrant, is eager for her mistress in this rash step!"

Geoffrey left the breakfast-room to put into execution his master's orders; while Lord Allan left his untaught breakfast to make preparations for the journey.

Within his private room, away from the eyes of his servitors, Lord Allan dropped his hitherto bold mien, and an expression of deep humiliation overspread his features. He clasped his hands convulsively, and said:

"I am a ruined man if Genifreda be not found and compelled to wed Sir Clinton Deerwood. I know full well his disposition, and can expect no clemency from him. My rash habits of play have placed me all too surely within his power. He has won nearly all my once noble inheritance, and will not fail to strip me of every rood of land; and I—Lord Allan Fenlow, the last of my line, save him who lords it over yonder forest—shall be left a beggar! If I believed there was such a thing as retribution, I should say Giles Fenlow was avenged!" and he groaned in bitterness of spirit.

But he soon roused himself, for a messenger now announced that the horses and men were ready for the pursuit. Hastily assuming his riding-dress, he went down.

"The highest route to the seaport, as you know, good men, lies through Fenlow Forest yonder," he said, as he flung himself into the saddle, Geoffrey and Wilson on either side, on mettled steeds, as squires to attend him. "Who is afraid to follow me? Let such stay behind!"

For a minute a blank look settled over some of the men's faces. His own grew red with scorn and anger.

"Are ye such cowards? If I—your lord—am not afraid to cross Fenlow Wood in rescue of Lady Genifreda, why should ye tremble? Are we to be affrighted at the silly tales of travellers, who, mayhap, have been scared at their own shadows?" he cried, affecting a bravery he was at heart far from really feeling. And yet, his course was plain—that if he did not take the short cut across this wood his daughter would stand a good chance to escape the country; and thus dishonour and ruin would be his portion at the hands of the enraged Sir Clinton Deerwood.

Ashamed of their momentary apparent cowardice, the men now rallied, and signified their willingness, even eagerness, to follow Lord Allan to the rescue of his daughter; and they all set out across field, park and copse, until they struck into the narrow path, through which they advanced in single file into the deep forest.

For a long time they rode along, without sight of life falling on ear or eye, save the note of some bird in the noble trees, or the scamper of some squirrel or hare across their path. And the men had begun to imagine their fears but the weakness of their own brains, and were congratulating themselves upon their safe passage through this dreaded wood.

Wilson said to his companion:

"We are now well half way through the wood, Geoffrey, and have come as safe as if we were crossing Fenlow Park; and yet my heart sore misgave me as I set out."

"And so did mine too," was the reply. "I have heard so many stories of robbery at this Lord Giles Fenlow's hands, that I was struck amazed when my lord vowed that he would take this way. But I do begin to gather courage now, and hope that we may overtake our silly young lady, who has thus foolishly run away from this great match with Sir Clinton."

"Come on, my men! Did I not tell ye there was more fiction than truth about the prowess of this renegade kinsman of mine? And it sheweth now that he dare not come forth to attack the rightful lord of this wood," cried Lord Allan, with loud tone, growing confident now as he had proceeded so easily upon his journey.

But the words were no sooner uttered than all were startled by the sudden appearance before them of a manly figure, clad in a hunting dress of green, and with plumed hat set upon his waving brown hair. His hand grasped the hilt of a sword which rested in the jewelled scabbard that depended from his hips by a richly embroidered sash, whose ends were fringed with golden threads.

Every one of our travellers at once recognised in this personage who had come so suddenly into their midst Giles Fenlow, the bold outlaw chief; and emotions of fear crept suddenly into each heart. They now expected nothing but rough treatment, and maybe, captivity, at the hands of this man who had already carried dismay to many a noble family by despoiling them of the wealth which fell into his path.

But there was not given much time for thought, for the bold robber at once broke the fearful silence. His tones were most musical, and fell not unpleasantly upon the ears of the terror-stricken men who now were quivering with fear upon their horses.

"And so Lord Allan Fenlow thinks himself safe in venturing within Fenlow Forest in quest of his daughter! He has, doubtless, forgotten the little differences between him and Giles Fenlow, which made of the latter an outlaw, an outcast from the noble society which once was ornamented by this same bold chief's presence. But, seeing that thou hast chosen to forget this little occurrence, and knowing that thou wilt be glad to meet thy cousin again, I will only add that he now stands before thee in the person of myself, who am no other than Giles Fenlow, the terror of this forest!" and the man bowed low in mock humility, while he uttered a sarcastic, ringing laugh.

Lord Allan at first was affrighted, and grew white when his cousin began to speak, but as the latter proceeded his thoughts resolved themselves into plans, and he replied, with undaunted tone:

"I have not come hither to talk with thee, thou bold, reckless man, but am upon other matters, of which thou seemest to be well informed, for but now thou madest mention of my daughter's departure from her home. How thou knowest it troubles me not; but I pray thee keep us not longer here prating of thyself, for I must hasten on my way to find Genifreda, ere she reaches the convent for which she has set out," and the noble motioned for his retainers to ride forward, while he put spurs to his own steed in order to do the same.

But the outlaw chief had not done with him yet, and he cried out in a loud, authoritative tone, which caused every man to tremble anew with apprehension in his saddle, and Lord Allan to sink back into his own with a real fear now in his breast:

"Hold, Lord Allan! for Giles Fenlow has not done with thee yet. Thou hast done him too good service for the outlaw soon to forget it. Let me tell thee, my lord, that I am not one to let a debt go for ever unpaid; but I shall reward thee in a way which will suit me best, and thee the least; and which, for the present, will remain unknown to thee. I have stopped thee on thy journey to tell thee this, and also to say that thy daughter was seen within this forest but yestereve, and she was then en route for the convent of St. Mary."

And the outlaw chief uttered a most musical laugh, as if only too well pleased at being able to announce this fact to Lord Allan, who now sat at his horse in silence, and awaited the close of this speech ere again daring to venture to proceed on his way.

But Giles Fenlow has not had his full say yet; and again spoke in the same strange, merry mood:

"Thou hast my full permission to pass through this wood, both to and from St. Mary's Convent; and I can only bid thee speed on thy journey now, and a safe return with the Lady Genifrede, if thou art so fortunate as to find her before reaching that place!"

And he turned away as if to depart. But he suddenly paused, and said, ere he placed a silver whistle to his lips and blew a strong blast upon it:

"I will show thee a few of my followers, Lord Allan, lest thou go away with too light an estimate of thy cousin's prowess."

And then, at the summons, there suddenly appeared a score or more of tall, athletic fellows, clad in habiliments of green so near the colour of the surrounding wood, that at first the amazed lord and his retainers could scarcely separate them from the shrubs and bushes which grew about them.

But another signal from the chief called them into motion, and his hand advanced and surrounded him in silence. Then they looked from him towards Lord Allan and his retainers, and perceiving that it was not opposed to his wishes, gave a loud cheer for Giles Fenlow, the brave outlaw of Fenlow Forest; and the woods rang with the sound, and the distant echoes floated back to their ears in a repetition of this enthusiastic shout; and Lord Allan and his retainers shuddered now in redoubled fears, for they knew that only through the clemency of Giles Fenlow would they be permitted to escape the hands of his band.

At length silence came once more. The shout had died away, and the men, at a motion of their chief, all disappeared as suddenly and mysteriously as they had come, and Giles Fenlow again stood alone before Lord Allan and his retainers.

"I have done with thee now, Lord Allan! Thou canst depart in peace. On thy return through this wood, thou wilt not be molested. I have already taken my revenge for the life thou hast put upon me. It is still a mystery to thee, but some day thou wilt know it fully. Till that day I bid thee adieu!" and with these words the chief turned away, and was soon lost to view in the depths of the forest.

Lord Allan and his retainers now breathed again in comfort. They well knew that Giles Fenlow never broke his word, and therefore were easy as to the remaining portion of their journey. The man Martin drew a sigh of relief as he wiped the perspiration from his heated face and exclaimed:

"Bless all the saints in the Calendar that we have got off so easy, when Giles Fenlow might have strung every man of us to a tree-top and left our carcasses to swing in the wind and tempt the vultures in their flight. Ah me! but I expected we were all gone when that bugle note rang out, and so many outlaws sprang up seemingly from the rocks and bushes about us."

"And I, too, gave myself up for lost, and said my prayers. But this Giles Fenlow is a generous fellow, after all, and deserves more praise than censure from us," said another of the men, who now waited around their master for his signal to proceed on their way.

Lord Allan felt equally as thankful as his retainers at the departure of his bold cousin. But he was not a man to express this in words; and so only said now, in a decisive voice, gathering up the horse's rein, which had fallen to the animal's neck:

"Let us not waste further time in words. We have been fortunate in escaping Giles Fenlow's wrath. It probably was owing to the fact of our common blood, for the man would not have the mean spirit to injure a kinsman. But we must not linger here to talk over our deliverance. Time is precious. Let every man at once mount his horse, and we will press on our journey with all possible despatch, or the Lady Genifrede will have gotten so far the advance of us that we shall not overtake her till it is too late for her rescue."

Every man now remounted his steed, for some had sprung from them with terror at the sudden appearance of the outlaw's men; and they rode on after Lord Allan, who followed the guide who had come with them on the journey.

Several hours' riding brought them to the end of the forest; and now the setting sun proclaimed that the day was almost ended. But they rode forward till they came to the little village beyond; and here, at the inn, they dismounted for fresh horses, while Lord Allan entered, to make inquiries concerning any traveller who had passed through the town the previous night answering to the description of his daughter. His lordship could obtain no tidings of such a personage, and could only think that Genifrede must have ridden on to the next town ere stopping to change her steed; and so he ordered a supper to be made ready and placed in the saddle-bags of the fresh horse he rode, and then summoned his retainers, and they all rode forward again towards their destination.

Some three weeks passed away, and Lord Allan Fenlow and his servants left the town of Chalon in France, whither they had gone in search of the Lady

Genifrede. The Mother Superior and the priests at St. Mary's Convent had neither seen nor heard of any such personage as the Lady Genifrede Fenlow. There had been no new arrival at the cloister for the space of a year, and the one he sought must have obtained admittance at some other institution.

This was the reply made to Lord Allan's inquiries, and, at length, that nobleman was forced to believe the story, and not knowing of any other convent nigh this place, found himself turning back for want of knowledge how to proceed. And so again the noble found himself and his retainers riding through Fenlow Forest, and again in the haunts of Giles Fenlow and his men. But he did not fear the outlaw chief, for he remembered his plighted word that he should return unmolested through this dreaded wood. But suddenly, as he rode forward, his horse stumbled and fell, bearing his master beneath him to the ground.

(To be continued.)

THE DOUBLE FORTUNE.

EPITOME

Of opening Chapters published in EVERYBODY'S JOURNAL.

The landed gentry of England are famed for the picturesque beauty of their country seats; and amongst the many such residences which adorn this fair and happy land, it would be no easy task to light on one entitled to bear away the palm from The Lindens, the seat of Sir Frederick Hamlin, situated between Pevensey and Hastings.

Sir Frederick—than whom probably no finer specimen of an English country gentleman ever lived—was about forty-five years of age; his figure rather above the common height, and pale and heavy; his features well expressing his character, in which generosity and kindness were conspicuous.

Beloved by his tenantry, and respected by all his neighbours of his own rank, Sir Frederick was, nevertheless, a lonely man. He was a widower, his only child, Arthur, being absent, pursuing his studies at the German University of Bonn. But although without any other inheritor of his name, Sir Frederick had one to whom he gave all the affection of a father—his adopted daughter, Amy Hamlin.

Somewhere there is always a void in the parental heart that a son cannot entirely fill; and, as a daughter, Amy Hamlin completely satisfied, in this respect, every desire of Sir Frederick. She was as dear to him as though she had been his own, and she loved him tenderly and fondly, as the only parent whom she had ever known.

At sixteen years of age Amy Hamlin could not be called beautiful; her figure was good, but wanting that roundness of outline natural to most girls at her age; but every feature of her face expressed the refinement and purity of her soul. Her dark gray eyes possessed something in their depths that was marvellously like the light of genius, and her voice was rich, soft, and musical. At sixteen, as we have said, Amy Hamlin was not beautiful, but it would be a safe prophecy to predict that she would certainly be so at twenty.

Sir Frederick Hamlin was one of those men who delight in pet projects, and his darling desire was to marry Amy to Arthur. For this object he had had her educated, and to its accomplishment he now looked forward as near, for Amy was on the verge of womanhood, and Arthur was daily expected home, his studies being completed.

The subject was constantly spoken of by Sir Frederick to Amy, to whom it had become so familiar as to be almost her one idea. It was an anticipation and a hope, but still chequered by a dim foreboding, on the score of the mystery connected with her birth. This was the subject under discussion between Sir Frederick and Amy when our story opens.

To her entreaty that he would enlighten her regarding her parentage, and his adoption of her, Sir Frederick had replied, with a sigh, and a tremor of emotion that shook his entire frame:

"Do not let the mystery of your birth make you unhappy, Amy. I have promised to give you every information in my power at the proper time. It has not come yet. I will keep my promise when it has. And do not I love you as a father? You are as dear to me now as my own son Arthur, and will be dearer still when you become my Arthur's wife."

"You have been always loving and kind to me, dear father, and I will wait patiently for the knowledge of my own parents which you promise to give me," replied Amy. "But Arthur"—and her voice betrayed an evident maiden hesitancy—"may not wish to marry me. He must have seen during his absence many whom he would prefer to me."

"Arthur was very fond of you before he went to Germany; and I am sure he will not have changed. He is not likely to have met with anyone so loving

and so good—I will say so lovely, too—as yourself, Amy," answered Sir Frederick.

But still the possibility suggested by Amy startled him. Should it prove a reality, it would be a terrible blow to Sir Frederick Hamlin, whose own happiness as well as that of Amy and Arthur, he considered depended on the union he had for years designed between them.

The conversation of Amy and Sir Frederick was here broken by the announcement of the arrival of a gentleman, and both for a moment imagined that Arthur Hamlin, resolved to take his father by surprise, had come sooner than he had appointed. But a few minutes sufficed to dispel any such fancy. The new arrival was not Arthur, but Raymond Welsley, the son of Sir Frederick's cousin, Edmund Welsley.

Raymond Welsley was a handsome man, but a spendthrift and a *rout*. He had dissipated the means of his father at his decease, had left him; and now, as the only resource open to him of leading an idle, and, at the same time, enjoyable life, he had come to quarter himself on the hospitality of Sir Frederick Hamlin.

Practised man of the world as he was, his first sight of Amy gave him a sense of genuine and respectful admiration which no woman whom he had hitherto encountered had awakened. He learnt in the first few moments after his arrival by Sir Frederick's introduction that Amy stood to him in the position of an adopted daughter. He knew Sir Frederick to be wealthy as he was generous, and calculating that Amy would surely, therefore, possess a rich dowry, he at once laid his plans, and resolved to win her as his wife.

A born schemer was Raymond Welsley, and he was made still more so by the present straitened state of his resources. But he was in this respect infinitely inferior to his sister Edith, who had been for some time resident at a Parisian *pensionnat*, and thence had emerged into the gay society of the French capital; her natural heartlessness quickly rendering her an accomplished adept in all the arts of fashionable life.

Apparently, however, Edith Welsley, as a schemer, had not been successful; she was still Edith Welsley, and dependent upon her own slight independence for her living, instead of having at her command the resources of a wealthy husband, as she had hoped to have. But her means, like those of her brother, had been so strained by her expenses in Paris, that long, when Sir Frederick Hamlin—at the instigation of Raymond Welsley, however—wrote to her, to invite her to come and stay a short time at the Lindens, she joyfully accepted the invitation.

Not many weeks had passed after Raymond's arrival, therefore, ere Edith Welsley also became an inmate of the Lindens. Her arrival was welcomed with genuine pleasure on the part of Amy, who felt the need of a friend of her own sex; and this feeling Edith strove to deepen, appearing in every way to show Amy that she felt the truest affection for her, whilst, in reality, she bitterly detested her in her heart. And this, for two reasons: Amy stood doubly in her way, being only a stranger in blood, who had been adopted by Sir Frederick, whilst she herself was a relation, being the daughter of his cousin; and, moreover, Amy was the destined bride of Arthur Hamlin, whose admiration and wealth Edith Welsley had made up her mind to win before she had been many days a guest of his father.

It had, indeed, first entered into her scheming brain to attract Sir Frederick himself, and so become at one bold stroke mistress of The Lindens, and the arbiter of Amy's future fate. What that would be, so far as it depended on the will of Edith Welsley, it would not be difficult to guess. This bold project she would probably have succeeded in, had not a tragical occurrence, which she could not foresee, shattered the web of wiles she had begun to construct.

Sir Frederick's only brother, while travelling in Calabria, was set upon by brigands, who, finding very little money or valuables in his possession, made him a prisoner in one of their mountain fastnesses until he should obtain money from England for his ransom, and threatened his life if he did not pay them highly to spare it. A communication to this effect was despatched to Sir Frederick by the captive, who implored his brother to send a trusty messenger with the ransom-money, so that there might be no delay nor mischance in effecting his release.

An errand like this was sure to be a point of honour—as it was of natural affection—with Sir Frederick, and he at once obtained the necessary amount, and departed to ransom his brother. Not without regret, however, did Sir Frederick enter on his journey. He was loth to leave Amy at the Lindens without him, and it was impossible to take her with him whilst the Welsleys were his guests, setting aside the consideration that the journey was not without a certain amount of peril, to which he could not think of exposing her; and he was anxiously expecting the return of Arthur.

Arthur's return was indeed expected daily; but Sir Arthur reflected that every hour's delay on his part might jeopardise his captive brother's life. And so, leaving a long and affectionate letter for his son, explaining the urgent reasons of his absence, and dwelling at some length on his wishes respecting the long-desired union with Amy, he set out for Calabria; making Salerno the first point of his journey, and taking with him his valet Grey.

Nearly coincident with the departure of Sir Frederick was the return home of Arthur Hamlin to The Lindens.

Arthur Hamlin had gone to the German University a boy in mind as in body—he came back with the developed intellect and frame of a man. Amy speedily noticed that he was not only changed in outward appearance—for love is quick-sighted—but she observed with a pang that there was a change too—slight, indeed, it might be—in his manner to her. Jealousy is almost as quick-sighted as love; and Edith, who on Arthur's arrival had decided to transfer her matrimonial schemes from his father to himself, was jealous almost to frenzy that so unsophisticated a girl—"so plain a thing," she called her—should be the bride-elect of Arthur, and therefore the prospective mistress of The Lindens; and so she also noted that Arthur's manner to Amy was not so enthusiastic or lover-like as his father's conversations had led her to expect. If he meant to marry her, he was not a very demonstrative lover; and perhaps he did not love her at all. Here was ground for hope! If there was a want of ardour in Arthur's bearing to Amy now, why, Edith calculated, could she not contrive to create a coolness in it? and why not cultivate that into becoming a breach? That point gained, why not contrive to make him marry herself?

Thus did Edith cogitate while the guest of her young host, even while affecting the tenderest and closest friendship for Amy.

Innocent and unpractised as Amy was, it is no wonder she believed that in Edith she had found a bosom friend—one to whom she could speak of all that was in her own young and guileless heart. And she opened without hesitation its inmost recesses to Edith, who saw nothing there but a deep and steadfast love for Arthur Hamlin.

Edith knew, somehow—for it is strange how such a nature as hers could have known anything at all of the quality of genuine love—that such a love as Amy's for Arthur would never alter, and never hesitate to make any sacrifice, if sacrifice were ever needed. And even this knowledge she resolved, if need be, to make use of to serve her own purpose. It would help her scheme powerfully to make Amy believe that Arthur was indifferent to her love, that he revolted against his father's choosing her for his wife, and in that event she calculated that Amy's love would easily lead her to take some step that would alienate Arthur from her irrevocably.

Raymond Welsley, too, had his own designs on Amy. He knew, as we have said, that she was not Sir Frederick's own daughter, but was so beloved by him that on her marriage she would be sure to bring her husband a rich dowry. As she was not the daughter of Sir Frederick, whose daughter was she? He set himself to solve this enigma, and he before long made a discovery that more than ever spurred his desire to win and marry Sir Frederick Hamlin's namesake protege.

With Arthur Hamlin Raymond did not get on well; the tastes and manners of the two young men were cast altogether in a different fashion; and, as a consequence, Raymond shortened his stay at The Lindens, and returned to town, leaving his sister behind. This answered his purpose much better than remaining in the country; the investigations respecting Amy's parentage which he had undertaken could be best prosecuted in London, and his absence could not at all affect Edith's plans—indeed she would be freer to exercise her wiles upon Arthur; and how Edith's wiles were working, was not long in becoming apparent.

On the day succeeding Raymond's departure from The Lindens news arrived there which brought consternation to all, and mourning and dismay to at least one heart. Intelligence was received that Sir Frederick Hamlin had met his death among the lawless brigands of Calabria; a random shot, fired in a sudden raid which the Italian soldiers had made upon them having struck him down mortally wounded.

To Amy this was a blow little less terrible than death itself. She, from her earliest years, had entertained for Sir Frederick the tenderest affection—no daughter could have loved him more deeply; and, girl though she was, she could not but know that in losing him she had been deprived of the surest protector. As he was the dearest friend she had in the world, she felt Sir Frederick's death to be the greatest sorrow she had hitherto known.

Arthur—now become Sir Arthur Hamlin—had grown daily more reserved towards her; and not long

after his father's death she one morning received a message that he would be glad speak with her in the library. She obeyed the summons.

"Amy," he said, "among my father's papers I have found some which concern you. I had always thought you were a ward of my father's, but I find that you have only been adopted by him. I have also discovered a casket—here it is," he added, taking in his hand a magnificent casket of gold, set with diamonds, and bearing the inscription: "F. C. to E. G."—"These papers and this casket belong to you: pray take them."

Amy took them in a tremor of surprise and expectation.

"And now," resumed Sir Arthur, "let us understand each other. My father wished me to marry you, as you know."

Amy trembled and flushed, while her eyes shone with a happy light—her fond idolatry of years showing itself in every feature.

"He could not answer for my affections," pursued Sir Arthur, coldly; "nor for yours. You are now free to marry whom you please, and when you do so you shall have a dowry fitting for the adopted daughter of Sir Frederick Hamlin. I am not certain that I shall ever marry; at least I shall never marry, Amy, a woman whom I cannot esteem—certainly not a forward, ambitious girl, who may desire to thrust herself upon me to gain wealth, influence, and position."

Amy, in her amazement at this speech, was powerless to speak a word; she could only utter a low wall of anguish.

"We will drop the subject here, if you please," added Sir Arthur, but in a softer tone, for he could not help pitying her as she stood there beside him, her face and attitude bespeaking so much suffering. "I will be a brother to you always, Amy, and you shall want for nothing in my power to give you."

Amy could stay to hear no more. She took the papers and casket extended to her; and, with blinded eyes and reeling brain, tottered from the room.

How little could Sir Frederick have foreseen that the love for his son, which he had taken such care to instil and foster in the heart of Amy, should prove to her a source of such bitter anguish as she now felt? How little did that son know how deep and true, and pure, was the love she felt for him, even while he was thus rending her heart by those cruel words he had spoken—"a forward and designing girl," "thrusting herself upon him!" How little did either Arthur or Amy know how much of this misery was owing to the deliberate machinations of Edith Welsley? Yet so it was!

Vigilant as Edith was in everything, she was quite aware that Sir Arthur had sent for Amy into the library, and she was at no loss to guess upon what subject. She had, indeed, herself given Sir Arthur the text upon which he had chiefly spoken—she it was who had called Amy "forward," "designing," and "ambitious;" and, eager to know the result of the interview from Amy, she hastened to her room. She found her there, moaning in her agony:

"Oh, that I could die! Oh, why must I live any longer? And I love him so, Edith!—I love him so!" And she told Edith all that had transpired.

"I would die for love of no man," said Edith; "nor would I remain in the same house with a man who could use such words as you say Sir Arthur spoke to you!"

"Oh, Edith, what would you do? Where would you go, if you were in my place?" wildly interrogated Amy.

"I would go away, most certainly—why not to London, and be independent? You have some money, I suppose, and you have talent, I know, in music. You could easily obtain a situation as governess."

The wiles of Edith Welsley had prospered, so far, beyond even her most sanguine expectations, and they prospered still; for that night Amy quitted The Lindens—her once happy home—directing her course to the railway-station near, from whence she was swiftly carried to the great city, to make one more among its myriads of pleasure-seekers or heart-broken toilers.

Action Amy soon felt to be absolutely necessary, if the anguish at her heart was not to prostrate her hopelessly. And so she at once bent all her energies towards the one object of obtaining an engagement as governess. In this she was more successful than many are. An advertisement obtained her an engagement, within a week after her arrival in London, in the establishment of Lady Claremont, in Grosvenor Square, as governess to her two daughters.

With a feeling of thankfulness that Heaven had so far favoured her, as to have enabled her to attain a creditable position, where she could remain unknown to all, and, by the energetic discharge of her duties towards her young charges, keep in subjection the terrible agony at her heart, Amy resigned herself to her fate.

At The Lindens Edith was now triumphant. She had played her cards so well that Sir Arthur, from open admiration, had gone so far as almost to make her the offer of his hand for which she had striven so unscrupulously and treacherously. Probably, had it not been for the recent death of his father, he would have done so. As it was, Edith felt sure that she had won her prize, and that, in a short time, Sir Arthur would make her a formal offer.

Indeed, he gave her to understand as much one day, when he acquainted her that he should leave her to act as mistress of The Lindens—for he had business which required him to be absent some little time. At a specified date, he said, she could rejoin him in town at the family mansion, which, if she chose, she might throw open to the fashionable world, and see something more of gay society than she had lately.

This was an object dear to the heart of Edith, and she acquiesced in Sir Arthur's suggestion with ill-concealed delight. Everything was happening in accordance with her wishes; and, ere long, she found herself installed in Sir Arthur's town residence, and in the full tide of fashionable enjoyment.

Amy had secured a refuge, it is true, but speedily she discovered that she was not to escape fresh unhappiness, even in her now humble sphere.

The heir of the Claremonts—Lionel by name, and an officer in the army—had come home from India, and on the first day of his arrival, accidentally encountering Amy in a corridor leading to her pupils' lesson-room, her beauty struck him so powerfully, that even while ignorant as to who this phenomenon of female loveliness might be, but supposing her to be a visitor to his lady mother, he resolved to devote such energies as he possessed to the task of winning her, and making her the offer of his hand and heart. When he learnt from Lady Claremont that the lady whom he had encountered was "only Miss Hamlin, the governess of his sisters," Lionel Claremont—with the loose licentiousness of military morals—flattered himself that he need not trouble himself to go through any process of wooing, or formal offer of marriage—he could win "the girls' governess" another way.

With this object, on which he was desperately intent, he called his valet Rawlins into council, gave him a *carte blanche* how to act, and supplied him with money plentifully; as to its expenditure stipulating only that he should get Amy away, and secured in some retreat where she should be in his power.

Incredible as such a thing may in these days seem to be, Rawlins actually succeeded in accomplishing this—abducting Amy forcibly, and placing her in confinement, in a secluded house, kept by a female relative of his own, in the country.

But chance had favoured this scheme not a little. Lady Claremont had sent her daughters, thinking they were requiring a change of air, to their country residence, and their governess had to accompany them.

Raymond Welsley had, amongst his other discoveries, learnt that Amy was—unknown to everyone but himself—a governess in the family of Lord and Lady Claremont—but he feared to compromise or distress her by calling on her while in Grosvenor Square, for Raymond had really loved her from the first, and shrank from anything that might cause her pain. When he found that she had gone to the country residence of the Claremonts, he quickly followed. He sent her a note, entreating for an interview, in which he skilfully introduced an allusion to Sir Arthur, respecting whom, he said, he had some information to give her, thinking that anything relating to Arthur would be sure to make Amy accede to his request for an interview.

He judged rightly. Amy gave Raymond Welsley an appointment to meet him in the grounds attached to the house. Here Raymond made her a passionate offer of his hand and heart, as he had, indeed, done once before at The Lindens. He did more; he informed Amy that Sir Arthur was under an engagement to marry Edith at the end of the "season," and pleaded his cause so powerfully, that the girl's agonised and cruelly-betrayed heart almost turned to him. At the close of their interview Amy had given Raymond a promise that within a week she would give him the answer to his suit, and tell him whether she would accept or decline his offer.

Returning from this interview alone through the grounds, she had been waylaid by Rawlins—"chloroformed," as he afterwards informed his employer—and carried off senseless, and committed to the custody of Rawlins's relative.

It would be a sad world, indeed, if favouring chances did not sometimes occur to the innocent and the good as well as to the crafty and the wicked. And a chance did occur to Amy, thus terribly entrapped to her dishonour.

Mrs. Thomas—so was Rawlins's relative named—was a woman, indeed, in shape, but hideous as a

Calmuck in feature, and terrible as a tiger in heart. She had two all-powerful passions—one the love of money, the other the love of drink.

Rawlins, on giving Amy into her custody, had paid her well, and promised her much more money for keeping her prisoner secure until the arrival of Mr. Lionel. But in the joy of her cruel heart at so much good fortune happening to her, Mrs. Thomas could not refrain from indulging in her dominant propensity for drink.

She indulged in it so unrestrainedly that Amy began, even amidst the weight of desolation and despair which was pressing upon her, to see a glimmer of hope. She even encouraged Mrs. Thomas, who needed very little encouragement, to indulge; and so, when her gaoler, after a long visit to her in her room, had sat down in a chair and fallen asleep, as a result of her potations, Amy saw that the moment had come for her to make an effort to effect her escape from the dismal doom preparing for her. Swiftly, yet stealthily, she possessed herself of Mrs. Thomas's keys; swiftly and stealthily she crept out of the accused house; and swiftly she sped away from it, whither she scarcely knew. Instinctively, however, she took a direction through the fields and woods surrounding her late prison-house, which led her to the high road.

Here she paused to breathe, and consider what course to pursue; and at this juncture a country light cart, with a farmer driving it, came by. She begged a seat in it, and the man's good nature readily accorded it, for he saw she was a woman—a young and pretty woman—almost sinking from fatigue.

Amy was free! She made her way as quickly as possible back to the country residence of the Claremonts whence she had been abducted by Mr. Lionel's valet; but, on her arrival there, found that her pupils had been removed again to town. Thither she at once proceeded, startling Lionel Claremont, whom she met in the hall, into a fierce execration on Rawlins for not keeping his prisoner safely until he should have come to visit her, which he was that very day intending to do.

He changed his plan instantly. While Amy hastened to her own room to change her soiled dress before presenting herself to Lady Claremont, Lionel sought his mother, and told her a tale to account for her governess's disappearance, which, Lady Claremont said, left her no alternative but to discharge her at once.

Amy, on presenting herself to her ladyship, was civilly told that she must not consider herself any longer the young ladies' governess; her conduct was disgraceful and could not be tolerated, and so, paying her the arrears of salary due, Lady Claremont dismissed her from her presence requesting her to have her things taken away as quickly as possible.

No remonstrance—no explanation—was permitted, or would be listened to; and so, once more, Amy's cruel fate seemed to have shut out every ray of hope.

Once more homeless in the midst of ten thousand homes, Amy, when she had somewhat recovered from the excitement of her interview with Lady Claremont, and her removal into the apartments she had occupied before her engagement by her ladyship, sat sadly thinking over the difficulties and dangers of her position. Was there no friend living to whom she could turn? Yes, she thought there was one—Edith. Raymond had told her that Edith was in London, at Sir Arthur's town residence. She would go there privately, and surely Edith would be able to advise and assist her.

Edith received her with the impressive show of affectionate friendship which she had always assumed, although an envious pang shot through her heart on seeing how much more beautiful Amy had become than she had been at the Lindens; for there is a kind of beauty which sorrow develops and intensifies; and such was Amy's.

She told her of the persecution and violence to which she had been subjected by Lord Lionel Claremont, and explained her present position, asking Edith's advice as to her future course of action. The false friend saw nothing better than to continue as she had begun; and calculating that Amy might dread—which in reality she did—being discovered by Lionel Claremont, urged her to at once change her name, as a means of baffling any pursuit of her by him; adding that Sir Arthur had more than once spoken to herself on the subject, expressing his annoyance that she still continued to bear his family name. This cunningly-barred arrow told, and Amy decided with an aching heart to accept the name which Edith suggested to her to assume.

It was that of Miss Vale; and, as Miss Vale, Edith pledged herself to use her influence in obtaining employment for Amy, as governess, with a friend of her own—a Mrs. Nelson. Then Edith told her of her own engagement to Sir Arthur, boldly assuring her that everything was settled for the marriage except naming the day.

The heart of Amy, already full to bursting, could bear no more. She arose to depart, and Edith, who had, during the interview, dreaded the arrival of Sir Arthur, with secret joy saw her to the door, and even accompanied her into the corridor. Here her fears lest Sir Arthur should arrive before Amy departed, were realized—he came in the instant Amy and Edith reached the corridor; but the terror Edith felt on the score of Sir Arthur's possible recognition, and consequent explanation with Amy, was groundless. She had become so greatly altered in dress and general appearance that he passed them both, with merely a bow to Edith, and entered the drawing-room to await her coming.

Edith did not enter the drawing-room, however. The situation of affairs was too urgent to permit a moment to be lost, now that Amy was in London and could at any time she chose call at Hamlin House, as she had done that morning. Edith resolved to act swiftly now. She therefore retired to her boudoir, and wrote two notes—one to her brother Raymond, urging him to come to her immediately, as she had important news to give him respecting Amy; and the other to Lord Lionel Claremont, informing him that she could materially assist his views respecting Lady Claremont's late governess. In writing these notes her double objects were—to spur on Raymond to marry Amy, and so get her out of Sir Arthur's reach, should he ever relent or learn the truth respecting her; and, should Raymond not be able to win Amy's consent to marry him, then that Lord Lionel Claremont, on being informed of her present whereabouts, might once more get her into his power.

So remorseless in the pursuit of her own ambitious schemes was Edith now become, that this cruelly revolting plan to break the heart and destroy the happiness of one whom she had induced to believe firmly in her sisterly affection and friendship, actually gave her a feeling of triumphant satisfaction at its diabolical ingenuity! With malignant joy, she flattened herself that it could not fail.

In her own words, she was resolved to win with any weapons and by any means.

CHAPTER XXX.

We must now turn our attention to the fortunes of Sir Frederick.

As Grey, Sir Frederick's valet, stated, on his return to the Lindens, the baronet's journey to Salerno had been performed without incident.

On the morning subsequent to his arrival at that place, however, a simple-looking peasant, had called upon him with a note, without signature which stated that the bearer would conduct him to a rendezvous with the brigand chief. The note concluded by warning him to beware of treachery, as such a contingency would be provided for. It also promised that if he came in good faith, Sir Frederick's person should be respected and his safety guaranteed.

Under these circumstances, the baronet determined to go in person to his brother's rescue.

He removed from his person his watch and other valuables, retaining only a purse not very well filled. His papers and money he secured on the person of his faithful valet, and with him and the guide then set out for the rendezvous appointed.

"I'm afraid you ought to have stayed at the inn, Sir Frederick, and let me go on alone," said Grey, anxiously, as they rode along. "Had you not better go back now?"

"Hush, Grey, don't call me by my title," returned the baronet. "I wish to appear as my brother's agent, you know. I do not desire to give them any inducements to capture me!"

The valet gave a quick glance towards the guide, and answered:

"But that simple-looking peasant don't understand English, I am sure, sir."

"I dare say not, but he may be acquainted with English titles, for all that. Simple as he looks, Grey, he is one of the brigands, or I am greatly mistaken!"

Grey uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"And as to going back, Grey," continued the baronet, "that would be foolish. I have heard, in Naples and elsewhere, that this brigand, bad as he is, always respects the persons of ransom-bearers, and always keeps his word. He guarantees my safety if I am not treacherous, so we are safe. This little journey, with its spice of adventure, will give you something to talk about when you return to the Lindens," added Sir Frederick, with a smile.

The valet shook his head, saying:

"I'm sure I hope it'll all turn out right, sir, and I don't see why it shouldn't, when they say the brigand chief prides himself on never having broken his word; still I feel anxious. You can never depend on a bad man!"

For some time the little party rode on in silence.

At length, after some hours' ride, they came to a wild gorge between high hills. There was a profu-

sion of shrubbery, mingled with trees and rocks, and at the bottom of the gorge rolled a swift mountain-stream which here and there broke into small cataracts.

"This is the spot!" declared the guide, in Italian, halting. "The chief will see you here, signor. I will step back a little with your servant, for the chief would speak to you alone!"

Grey hesitated about retiring to a little distance, but his master said:

"Go with him, Grey. Have no fears. You needn't go out of sight, you know. Remember that the captain has a reputation for keeping his word, and that you and I are safe."

"Shall I transfer the money and papers to you now, sir?"

"No, keep them till I call you. It might be better if I should appear to have nothing with me. Now go!"

With a heavy heart, Grey followed the guide to the shadow of some trees a few rods distant, but he took good care to keep in full view of his beloved master.

The baronet dismounted, throwing the bridle of his horse over a bush near at hand, and awaited an interview with the dreaded brigand.

He had not long to wait.

Grey had no sooner dismounted and taken his position near the guide, than the latter uttered a loud shrill whistle, which was evidently a signal. It was immediately answered by a similar sound, and the next moment a man came out from amongst the dense shrubbery and advanced towards Sir Frederick.

The new-comer was a dark-faced Italian, with a sinister countenance, whose expression seemed treacherous. His dress was modelled somewhat after the style usually affected by the Calabrian brigands, his hat being tall and pointed, and adorned by a long, straight feather, and his jacket being of black velvet made in the jauntiest fashion. It was open in front, displaying a ruffled shirt-front of the finest linen, and his other garments were equally costly and unique. Suspended from his waist by chains of wrought silver were bugle and whistle, both also of silver. From his belt protruded several costly weapons, which appeared to be worn more for ornament than for use.

All this Sir Frederick observed at a glance.

"Do you speak Italian, signor?" asked the brigand, in that language, pausing in front of the baronet.

Sir Frederick replied in the affirmative.

"Your name?"

"Frederick Haughton," replied the baronet, truthfully, giving his first and middle names. "I am an agent to treat with you for the release of your prisoner, Colonel Hamlin."

"You are not a milord?" asked the fellow, doubtfully, eyeing the noble face and form of the baronet with keen scrutiny.

"I am not. You are the brigand chief, Gueveno, I suppose?"

"No, signor. The captain has gone away for a few weeks. I am the first-lieutenant, and in his absence I take command. I am called Arvelo. I am, of course, empowered in the captain's absence to transact business in his name, and can free your friend at the moment the ransom demanded for his release is paid into my hands. You will pay the ransom demanded for the Inglesi?"

"I must first see him—see if he is safe and well," responded Sir Frederick.

"Have you the money with you?" demanded Arvelo.

"I am prepared to pay it," replied Sir Frederick, evasively. "Let me see the Inglesi, and I will then make the necessary arrangements for his release!"

The brigand hesitated, glanced at Sir Frederick and at his valet, who had been drawn by the guide still further into the shadow of the trees, and finally he blew his whistle.

It was answered by the appearance of another brigand from the shrubbery, leading an Englishman, whose arms were bound behind him.

This Englishman was almost a counterpart of Sir Frederick Hamlin, with the exception of his dress. The two gentlemen might have been taken for twin brothers.

The new-comer was conducted to Sir Frederick, at sight of whom he uttered a cry of joy and sprang to his embrace.

The emotion with which they greeted each other seemed to arouse the suspicions of Arvelo, and Sir Frederick endeavoured to regain his calmness as he said:

"I have come to ransom you, William. I have concealed my identity from these scoundrels, so that they should not take me captive too."

"You should not have come at all," said Colonel Hamlin, anxiously. "You have incurred a great

deal of risk by doing so. Couldn't you send a servant?"

"I have represented myself almost as one," responded Sir Frederick. "Have they treated you well?"

"The captain did," was the reply. "He has gone off somewhere now—to Naples, I think, in disguise, and this Arvelo has not been so complacent to me. I have lost my health and spirits in their dungeons. I am but the wreck of what I was. Indeed, Frederick, I think I am going to die—"

"Nonsense, William!" interrupted the baronet. "We'll nurse you up at the Lindens. You want Amy and Arthur to cheer you. I will now make the necessary arrangements for your freedom. Ah! how those fellows scowl at us!"

He stepped forward arm-in-arm with his brother, and was about to speak to Arvelo, when a clear bugle blast rang through the gorge.

The next moment a body of soldiers appeared in full view.

"Betrayed! betrayed!" cried Arvelo and his companions. "Ho, there! my brave fellows!"

As he uttered the call, Arvelo blew a blast upon his bugle, and the gorge seemed suddenly alive with brigands.

"Death to the traitor!" cried a dozen voices, and a dozen reports of carbines gave emphasis to their words.

Sir Frederick and his brother fell to the ground.

The soldiers advanced, and the bandits, the peasant-looking guide included, made a hasty retreat. They were pursued and fired at, but most of them succeeded in making good their escape.

As Grey had said, on seeing his master fall, he had joined the soldiers in their pursuit of the bandits, and, on his return, had found most of the wounded and dead bodies removed.

Among those removed was Sir Frederick Hamlin.

The brigands had returned to remove their dead, had discovered that the baronet was alive, but badly wounded in the head, and had also discovered that Colonel Hamlin was dead.

As the last expression of their malignity, and also to give the idea that they were in no haste to flee from the soldiers, they had, on their return, deliberately stripped Colonel Hamlin's body of its clothing and the few valuables he had been permitted to retain. Someone kinder than the rest had then thrown an old garment over him.

It was, therefore, the body of Colonel Hamlin that Grey had taken home. It was the body of Colonel Hamlin that Arthur and Amy had wept over, mourning the supposed loss of a father.

Retreating hastily with their dead and wounded, the brigands made their way in a direction opposite to that in which they had lured the soldiers, and soon came to a secluded spot, where their horses were awaiting them under the guardianship of several brigands.

Sir Frederick was tied to one of the horses, the wounded brigands were secured in the same way, as were also the dead whom they had brought with them. The bandits mounted, and all were soon proceeding rapidly to the southward.

Two hours later they arrived at a range of hills, divided by gorges and mountain torrents. In a secluded dell among these hills they dismounted, turning their horses loose to graze, and continued their journey on foot.

Sir Frederick, still insensible, was carried on the back of one of the brigands.

Continuing their way up along the bank of one of the streams, they at length paused before a jagged cliff, whose face was dotted with clumps of bushes. Pushing aside one of these clumps, and uttering a shrill cry as a signal to some concealed guard, Arvelo disappeared within an aperture just large enough to admit his body, and which had been effectually hidden by the bushes.

His example was followed by his companions, the last of the company carefully replacing the bushes in their former position.

The brigands passed along a narrow and dark passage, which seemed to slope downwards, and suddenly emerged into a large and magnificent cavern.

The walls were rough, and decorated with gay lamps and a plentiful supply of candles, all lighted. The uneven floor was cleanly swept, and at one side of the chamber was a fireplace skillfully hollowed out of the rock. It was so contrived as not to permit any perceptible smoke to escape.

In the centre of the cave was a long table, on which were bottles of wine, packs of cards, &c. Around the tables were chairs and wooden settles, and benches were placed against the rocky walls.

At the farther end the cavern branched off into numerous smaller caves, many of them the work of art, and off the main cave were dungeon-like cells, provided with doors, which were intended for the use of prisoners.

The main cavern was occupied by a score or more of brigands, engaged in various idle pursuits, who welcomed their companions with loud shouts of joy, which were changed to exclamations of grief as they beheld their dead and wounded companions.

Arvelo speedily made them aware of his misfortunes, and they then proceeded to care for the wounded.

The senseless body of Sir Frederick was laid upon a bench and attracted no attention until every brigand had been duly cared for.

"Our prisoner must be attended to," then declared the lieutenant. "We must dress his wound without further delay. Ho, there, Giorgio! you are the best doctor in the band—you shall attend to him!"

Giorgio, a sinister-looking fellow of middle age, stepped forward, and shook his head, saying: "He betrayed us, and I say let us kill him; the blood of our slain calls for vengeance!"

"Kill him! kill him!" cried a score of fierce voices.

"Kill the treacherous Inglesi!"

A dozen men stepped forward to execute the will of their comrades.

"Back all!" cried Arvelo, waving his hand. "You know well the rules of the band. No prisoner can be killed without the consent of the captain. You must, therefore, wait until his return before touching our captive. Do you suppose I would have ordered him to be brought to the retreat to be killed? Would I not have had him killed on the spot when I found he was alive?"

The men replied by a low sullen murmur.

"Look you," continued Arvelo, pointing to the form of the baronet. "Our prisoner is no common man. He must be a milord. We will restore him to health, and take our vengeance by demanding an immense ransom. When we get the ransom we'll talk of vengeance."

The brigands greeted this speech with cheers.

"So then, Giorgio," said the lieutenant, turning to that personage, "you shall not be balked of the ransom you crave. Prepare to gain it by restoring him to health."

Giorgio assented, and proceeded to examine the wound of the prisoner.

He discovered that a ball had entered the baronet's skull, and that a piece of bone was pressed inward in such a way as to rest upon the brain. His knowledge of surgery was extremely limited, but he managed to extract the ball, although so clumsily that Sir Frederick regained his consciousness by force of extreme agony. He then bound up the prisoner's head with a linen bandage, and contemplated the result of his work with intense satisfaction.

"Do you feel better now?" he asked, as Sir Frederick made an effort to rise.

The only reply he received was a vacant, wondering stare.

Giorgio regarded the flushed countenance of the prisoner a moment, and then felt his pulse, saying:

"The Inglesi has a fever coming on. Better put him out of the way, Arvelo, than to have him make so much trouble."

"You forget the laws of the band," responded the lieutenant. "Besides, I don't want him to die. He is the cause of my cousin's death at the hands of the soldiers, and he shall live to give me my revenge. Take care of him, then, Giorgio. Nurse him well. You shall have your reward."

"I am no woman that I should nurse him," grumbled Giorgio. "I like the fight, the retreat, the excitement of conflict, not the monotony of being a sick man's nurse, and that man my enemy."

Arvelo was thoughtful a moment, and then said:

"Well, well, my wife shall wait upon him. She will nurse him so that he will soon be well. She knows the properties of all the medicinal herbs, and has once or twice cured me of a dangerous fever. Lay him back on the settle, Giorgio, and go you for Pepita, while I examine his garments and find out who he is."

Giorgio disappeared in the direction of one of the inner caverns, while Arvelo made a rigid examination of the baronet's garments.

Of course he found nothing.

"I am sure he is a milord," declared Arvelo, when he had concluded the search. "He has not a scrap of paper, and but little money on his person. So much care looks suspicious. We will leave him to the captain when he comes, boys. The captain has English blood in him, and he can probably tell us who our prisoner is. Ah! here comes Pepita."

As he spoke Giorgio returned, followed by a woman—Arvelo's wife.

(To be continued.)

NATIONAL EDUCATION.—At a public meeting in favour of the National Educational League, held in Leeds, it was shown that the programme of the league was to secure a good education to every child

in the kingdom, and that the originators of the league were not secularists, but were unsectarian. It was determined to support the local branch of the league, it being contended that denominationalism had not nearly occupied the ground of education, but that there was ample scope left for both systems to work side by side.

Mr. A. R. SPOFFORD, the librarian of the National Library at Washington, states that there is not a library in that country which has yet reached the number of 200,000 volumes, although there are not less than twenty in Europe which can claim that number. The ten largest of American public collections of books are, the National Library, 183,000; Boston City, 153,000; Astor, 133,000; Harvard College, 118,000; Mercantile, of New York, 104,000; Athenaeum, of Boston, 100,000; Philadelphia, 85,000; New York State, 75,000; New York Society, 57,000; and Yale College, 50,000. Some months ago, Dr. James Rush bequeathed to the Philadelphia Library the sum of 1,000,000 dollars, to be expended in books; and the stockholders recently accepted the gift by the small majority of five votes.

EVELYN'S PLOT.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Oh, it was monstrous—monstrous!
Methought the billows spoke and told me of it,
The wind did sing it to me, and the thunder—
That deep and dreadful organ-pipe—pronounced
The name!

Shakespeare.

"It is well," Mordaunt's strange visitor replied, "it is well. All is over now; the last trying struggle past—the last shadow fitted away. Now I can speak without scruple—act without remorse. Basil, listen. I will confess the truth; I have no shame left now. I could speak before a whole world what I have to say. You, and you alone, have been the day-dream, the love, the idol—the base, unworthy idol—of my life. I, the courted, the petted, the once beautiful and wealthy child of idolising parents, the cherished sister of a wise and noble brother, lavished the whole treasure of a woman's love on you. I resented, I resisted the warnings of a father and brother. I did all but rebel against their power. And when the noble heart and true love of another had, at last, won on me to consent to be a bride—when the smiles of children and the love of a husband gilded my home in after days, and I had, at last, some chance of tasting peace and happiness—then you came once more, and poisoned every hope, every feeling. You wrought misery to many. Why did you do this, if you did not love me?"

"That is easily explained," he said, calmly. "I had strong reasons for wishing to marry a girl with a good fortune and high connections. I hated most cordially the man who was the favourite of your brother, and I made a deep vow of vengeance against them both, when I was at length refused and discarded by them. And that vow began to be carried out when you did me the favour to elope with me; it was carried out when the sure, if distant, prospect of ruin stared your brother in the face; it was carried out when his child was taken from him, his best-loved child—when a deadly disease attacked him—when disgrace was fast falling on him, and weighing him to the very earth. All this was a foretaste of the revenge that I had sworn to accomplish. And there is yet more to come. My full measure is soon to run over. Father, son, grandchildren, shall all taste of the bitterness that they mingled in my cup. They scorned me. The world shall scorn and loathe their very name. Now, do you understand me?"

"And you have no fear?"

"None."

"No fear of God?"

"I never knew Him."

"Nor of man?"

"I despise his power."

The woman gazed calmly on him.

"Then," she said, "then listen to me. The vengeance of the Almighty shall come down like hail on your head, and the hatred and scorn that you have striven to cast on the innocent shall recoil with double force on you. Even now, you are in my power. I know some of your secrets, though not all."

"Indeed?" he said, scornfully, "indeed? Methinks they must rest only on the word of a disgraced and guilty woman, and will meet with little credit, whatever they may be. May I ask their nature?"

"No," she said, "no. I am not so foolishly trustful as to place myself or the secrets in your power. But yet there is one token that may, perhaps, bring some conviction to you. Do you remember the Indian jewel, the magic ring?"

The man's face changed. A ghastly pallor came over it for an instant.

"What of that?" he said, "what of that? It is a

mere tale. "Who would believe you? I am not to be so easily daunted by shadows as you appear to think. Who would believe the tale at this distance of time?"

"Many," she said, "many, when joined to your own handwriting. Fool! Have you forgotten so soon?"

And she laughed scornfully.

His lips grew ashen for an instant. But still he kept his self-possession.

"An idle tale—an idle tale," he repeated. "And one that would criminate yourself far more than me. I despise such folly."

"Do you?" she said, "do you? Then, like many others, you blind your eyes to the pit that is open for you. Man, I can blast you at a word—if I but speak that word; and I swear that, unless you spare me—that is, those who are most dear to me by the ties of blood and affection—you shall not escape! I do not know to the full your plans and your crimes, but, at least, I am privy to what can bring you to—"

"To what?" he interrupted, scornfully, "to what? Merely to the reprobation of those whose opinion I value as I would the whistle of yonder wind. You can but prove that I wished a certain deed to be done, which was never effected. There is no punishment for that! And as to my plans, I can at once enlighten you as to their nature. The revenge that I meditated is nearly at its height. One—two—nay, three of the victims are levelled with the dust. Others, the last of the hated race, are on the verge of ruin and disgrace. And no human power—no fear for my own future in this world or the next, shall avail to snatch them from me! Now, do you comprehend me, Gertrude?"

The woman started at the familiar name, and a shiver ran through her whole frame.

"I have but little more to say," she suddenly broke forth; "but one more warning to give you. There was one who knew your secret, and who, in mercy to me—(the noble-hearted one!)—in mercy to the weakness of his wretched—but no, I dare not speak that word!" she added, with a shudder.

"What I would say is, that he knew your secret, and that he lives!"

And the words were hissed out in Basil's ears like the threatening of a serpent's sting.

He started violently.

"He? Do you mean your—?"

She waved her hand impatiently.

"Yes; I mean him—the true and noble man who knew and yet pardoned your crime! I saw him once. He is changed—much changed; but still, he lives."

Basil Mordaunt thought for a brief instant.

"And how do you know this?"

"It matters not. He whom we so deeply injured lives, and vengeance is at hand! Man, be warned and repeat!"

And ere he was aware of her purpose, she had glided from the room with the swiftness and noiselessness of a spectre. One moment's half-stupified pause, and then Basil rushed after the fugitive visitor with a speed almost equal to her own. But the moment he had snatched up his hat, and opened the hall-door, had sufficed for the disappearance of the strange guest; and he strode angrily to the corner of the square, where he fancied he could see her tall figure still standing, as if in uncertainty.

He was not mistaken. There was veiled female form watching the lights in his splendid house and his own hasty progress. He snatched her hand with eager, unhesitating violence.

"Gertrude! come back! I would speak with you! We cannot part thus!"

The woman did not speak, but quickly and unresistingly obeyed his behest; and in a few more minutes the two were in the full blaze of the library lights, and then she threw back her veil. Basil fell back in his chair as if he had seen a death's-head, and a faint groan escaped him.

"Am I possessed?" he said; "mad—dreaming! It was her—Gertrude! and now—"

"It is Helen," said the woman, who was none other than the mistress of the lone dwelling where the injured stranger had been conveyed.

"Basil, you are not dreaming; but you were and are possessed by evil spirits, and are watched by those you know not of, and who are preparing for your punishment. I saw that unhappy one enter and leave your dwelling. Now it is my turn to speak my warning! Listen: Basil, I am a fool—I know it—I feel it! But, still, a woman's love is a strange and unconquerable passion in such a nature as mine.

And—idiot, contemptible idiot that I am!—I cannot quite forget the past—I cannot forget that our earlier days were days of happiness and of love!"

For a moment Basil's lip wore its usual sneering smile, and his foot stamped impatiently. But then a change came over his mood, and he looked up with a softened glance.

"Helen," he said, gently, "Helen, you scarcely

do me or yourself justice. But you forget also that we are now of an age to look with calmness and sense on the past. It is true that I did feel for you what I have never felt for any other woman—that you are the only one I ever loved!"

She waved her hand impatiently.

"Hush!" she said, "hush! No falsehoods can avail you now—none! I am no weak fool to credit such tales. Your conduct has been sufficient proof of your feelings. You trifled with me—disgraced me in my own eyes—gained over me the power that the very knowledge of such disgrace gives to the man who has inflicted it! And then, you deserted and crushed me in my very heart's youthful gush of tenderness and devotion, when there was a chance of winning the rich Gertrude Danvers."

"Which chance I always suspected you of frustrating," he said, bitterly.

She laughed.

"I shall neither deny nor acknowledge that charge," she said; "but, at least, you may be very sure that her brother would never have given her to you without a further inquiry than your antecedents will bear. Do you suppose that he would have been so easily deceived, when an only sister was concerned?"

"I supposed that Danvers was rich—well, never mind. Go on. I should like to hear what view you take of these matters. It may be instructive in more senses than one."

She did not appear to heed the sneer, but went on:

"Then you failed, and you returned to me for a brief space; but, as I soon found, only to carry out your other plans—your plan of ruining the honour, the happiness, and the peace of her you had courted, and of all connected with her. And yet you say you loved me, and me alone!"

"So I did; may, I might almost say, so I do," he replied. "In any case, I never cared a farthing for any other woman, except as an amusement or a convenience. Listen to me, Helen, and be reasonable. You accuse me of deserting you for Gertrude Danvers. What of that? I was not rich enough to marry you, the poor, though lovely governess in his house. But still, I did prove my preference for you over the wealthy girl, who treated you but as a dependent and an inferior. If I had loved Gertrude, should I have courted you? If the governess of Mr. Danvers' little ones had not been more attractive than Mr. Danvers' sister, do you think I should have bestowed a single thought on the dependent while the heiress was near?"

The woman's eyes were downcast. He fancied that he was making an impression on her feelings, and went on yet more rapidly and with more apparent fervour:

"Again," he said, "you say that I only returned for a brief space, before I won the proud girl from her husband's arms. At least it was some three or four years, Helen, that you lived in love and happiness. And had I been rich, had my hopes been crowned with success, then I would have married you, as I promised and intended. But it would have been simple madness—and I had, besides, vowed deep and certain revenge, which that would have made impossible. Thus you see that it is not my will, but the various circumstances of your fate and mine, which have divided us."

He stooped forward as he spoke, and would have taken her hand, but she drew it back impatiently.

"No, no," she said, "you mistake—you mistake me entirely. You cannot understand a woman's love; you cannot comprehend a woman's unselfishness. Listen, and see whether it is in your nature to believe in, or even to understand, such feelings. When I told you that I loved you still, I did not mean with the foolish, weak, mad devotion of other years. I meant only that the memories of the past, the deep tenderness of those past days, had left so deep a trace, like the impression on hard granite, and which can never be effaced. I would not see you utterly ruined, punished, disgraced, as you certainly will be if you will not hearken to my warning; but, as for any renewal of such love as the past, any real affection for such as you, I tell you, Basil Maynard, that I would as soon wed or love the wretched beggar that haunts my path as one so debased as you."

He laughed bitterly.

"The old nature, I see—the old nature," he said, "Bitter, proud, and obstinate, as I remember of old."

"No," she replied, "no. Would that I had ever been of the nature I am now, and then you, at least, would never have won my love. But all this is idle, absurd. The whole purpose of my coming to-night was to say what I have already said: to bid you reflect before you persist in your plans—to tell you that sure and certain ruin awaits you if you carry out the villainy that is in your heart."

"Strong words, Helen."

"True ones, Basil, as you will find to your cost."

He was silent for a brief moment. Much, perhaps,

depended on that instant of reflection. The fate of many, and his own, was trembling in the balance.

At last he spoke:

"Helen," he said, firmly, "it is too late. I have gone too far. My whole life has been devoted for years to this one object. My whole heart and brain have been swallowed up in it; and I cannot, I will not, give it up for the vague fears and threatenings of a woman's brain. It cannot be—at least, not unless you can be more explicit than you are at present."

And a half inquiring, eager look came on his face.

"No," she said, "no; I cannot trust you enough, Basil—I cannot trust you enough. In justice to the innocent, I must not put them in the power of the guilty. When you have found the truth and justice of my words, then, still remember that I gave you time to repent and to escape. I have told you enough to warn you, and so my errand is done."

She rose, lingered one brief moment, as if to give him time to repent, then she walked to the door, paused again, and turned back.

Basil thought that she had relented, and his face wore a well-assumed look of pleasure and happiness at the idea.

She approached him slowly. She bent down and pressed her cold lips to his brow.

"That," she said, "is my farewell to the past—to the Basil Maynard that I loved as few women love; but from this moment all is over, and Basil Mordaunt shall have no further word nor thought of tenderness nor help from me."

The next moment the closing of the street door told him that his visitor was gone.

His face was pale and gloomy as he resumed his seat. The warning voice sounded in his ears. The look, the very touch of those cold lips, thrilled through him like an ice-bolt. But he resolutely shook off the weakness.

"Pshaw!" he muttered, "pshaw! the ravings of a disappointed woman! It is folly, and worse than folly, to regard them. My plans are concluded, and the crisis is at hand. I am not to be daunted by a half-frantic woman's tale."

And ringing the bell for cigars and lights, he began to smoke with the violence of a steam-engine rather than the calm pleasure which the employment is supposed to inspire in "Turk, infidel, or heretic," who is a slave to the "weed."

(To be continued.)

CHARLES MARKHAM'S LEGACY;

A STORY OF TWO CHRISTMAS EVES.

"WELL, Sancho, I suppose this is our future home? H'm, old fellow, we've been in worse quarters together before this. A little old-fashioned in furnishing, but substantial and comfortable so far; to-morrow we will investigate further. In the meantime, where is the letter I was to find on the drawing-room mantelpiece on my arrival? Ah! here it is, duly sealed and directed 'Charles Markham, Esq.' Now for the inside."

The speaker drew up a capacious arm-chair before a ruddy fire, and stretched himself lazily before breaking the seal of the large white envelope he held in his hand.

Sancho, an immense Newfoundland dog, rose and put his head on his master's knee, looking most affectionately into his face.

The room in which Charles Markham sat was a large drawing-room, whose proportions would have made four, at least, of the parlours, boudoirs, or other cosy sitting-rooms now in vogue. The carpets were of rich Brussels, well preserved; heavy crimson curtains draped the large windows, and the furniture was all of solid walnut, covered with crimson velvet. There were no knick-knacks scattered about, none of the trifles that fill up the modern *étagères* and centre tables. Heavy, costly bronzes were upon the mantelpieces, and on the walls were hung a few paintings of almost priceless value.

Had the other rooms of the large house been examined, the same tokens of wealth, the same absence of fashionable display or frippery of any sort would have been marked throughout. But, save in that large drawing-room, the whole building was wrapped in darkness, locked and secured, dreary with the cell-like gloom and chill that gathers after a few weeks of vacancy.

The young owner of this mansion, of which he had been the inmate one hour, as he sat in the great chair before the fire, looked most unlike his surroundings. His actual age was twenty-five, but no one would have guessed it, looking into his fair, round face, with its well-opened, large blue eyes, masses of yellow curling hair, beardless chin, and sweet, almost childlike mouth. He was dressed fashionably and expensively, yet without affectation. True, his studs were diamonds, his watch-chain of finest gold, his

boots of patent leather, and all his travelling array, piled in one corner, was of the best quality and newest device; but he looked like one accustomed to the use of wealth, and bore gracefully its tokens. His was a sunny face, bearing no marks of sorrow or care.

He was an orphan, but bereaved so long that it was a child's grief long past, and the fact that he was alone in the great world, with only few distant relatives, was no new phase of his existence. His father had left him an estate, which, by the careful management of trusted guardians, had educated him, giving him the benefit of a course of study as a lawyer, and left him an income sufficient to keep a single man in comfort, with even a margin for luxuries, but one that would require to be used frugally should a family ever look to it for support.

One month before the evening when Charles Markham sat in the blaze of the great fire with Sancho beside him, he had been established in a distant city as a lawyer, just admitted to the bar, a favourite in society, a sunny-faced, light-hearted young man, singularly unspoiled by a life of ease. It was before his first brief had been presented that he received a letter informing him that a great-uncle, of whom he had heard so little that he was scarcely aware of his existence, had died a bachelor, and left him sole heir to half a million and the house, to which he was to proceed at once, and read a letter he would find awaiting him.

"Here's the letter, Sancho, and here am I. Now, let's see, old fellow, what one has got to say to the other."

As he spoke he broke the seal, and opened the broad white sheet. Abruptly, without date or address, the epistle opened :

"I hated your grandfather, I hated your father, I hate you for their sake. Your father told me once that my money would bring a curse, because it was made by usury, grinding the face of the poor, oppressing the widow and orphan. It was all made so-all, and I leave you the money and the curse."

Charles Markham read the document twice in the most absolute amazement before he spoke again. Then he looked around the room, and shuddered as if with cold.

"That's a pleasant legacy, upon my word! Ugh! I feel as if the place was haunted. The old heathen! I never did him any harm. Who ever heard of such a way to spite a grandfather? Christmas Eve, too! I won't have his money! I won't stay here! I—Why, Sancho, my head is fairly spinning. Let's take a walk, old fellow, and get the cobwebs out of my brain. Seven o'clock," he added, consulting his watch, "and we have had no supper. Come!"

The dog shook himself eagerly as if well pleased, as his master drew on overcoat and gloves, and pulled his travelling collar up over his ears, for he had already experienced the piercing cold of the winter evening. Closing the front door and pocketing the key, the young heir to the uncomfortable legacy was soon in the midst of a busy throng of Christmas gift seekers, who were crowding the streets, pushing, jostling, hurrying, laughing, or scolding, as the humour dictated. It was a splendid night; the moonlight pouring down on the gaily-dressed crowd, and every shop was lighted to its full capacity, and decorated with all its Christmas attractions.

A lonely, home-sick feeling oppressed the fair-haired youth, as he mingled in the busy throng, remembering that there was no one whom he might bring a Christmas offering, no table where a plate would be set for him, no hand or voice to give him greeting on the universal holiday. He ate his lonely supper, treated Sancho generously, and then again resumed his walk in the streets, where the shops seemed most attractive, half-inclined to take night train for his old home, and throw his great-uncle's legacy to the winds.

It was, perhaps, with some vague idea of ridding himself of some of the weight on his heart, that he distributed bountifully all the smaller coin in his possession amongst the poor children gazing wistfully in the shop windows, and even went in himself and purchased two resplendent wax dolls, admired by a pair of ragged little girls, sending them home in a state of ecstatic delight to announce that Santa Claus himself, with a big dog, met them in the street. Not a beggar appealed in vain that night to the lonely young man; and when long after midnight he put the key in the lock of his hall door, it was with a far lighter purse than when he went out, although not one package was in his hand to indicate a purse.

Sancho, however, had made a more profitable trip, for as they entered the still brilliantly-lighted drawing-room, he walked forward and deposited at his master's feet an object which, at the first glance, he took to be a large white bird, but which, upon examination, proved to be a lady's ermine muff, with the silver cord, which had fastened it around the

neck, broken. It was a dainty little affair, lined with blue silk, with a pocket on the outside, over which buttoned a small animal's head with bright black eyes.

"Why, Sancho, you scamp! where did you get this?"

The dog looked up, wagging his tail, and evidently expecting to be praised.

"Did you pick it up in the street? Good dog! Now, I wonder who has lost such a dainty trifle! Come, sir, we must examine your spoil to try to find an owner."

The new interest had quite driven away the reluctance he had felt to passing the remainder of the night in the house, and he resumed his seat in the great arm-chair, after hastily divesting himself of his out-door garments, and began to search the pockets of the muff.

"A portemanteau, and a little beauty, too. Let's see the inside—eleven pounds, six shillings, and sixpence; and that's all; no papers, no card. What's next? Two pairs of kid gloves, small enough for Titania. What's this done up so nicely? A jeweller's box and—oh, Sancho, you thief!—what! a diamond ring! A gentleman's ring, too—but what a stone! See it flash, you scamp! Let me see! Lettering inside—'M.B. to H.B.' Just see that, you rogue! Somebody's Christmas present, a gage diamond, too, it is likely. But, stay, this lettering was done at—let me see the box again—'B.—and Co., jewellers.' They will know who ordered it, for I don't believe they see such stones every day. I never saw such a diamond."

And, indeed, it was beautiful enough to account for the young man's admiration. Large and very perfect, its shape was oval, and in the centre was gathered a yellow shadow that intensified its brilliancy. It was set in four golden claws, which covered but very little of the stone, though the ring itself was very heavy of pure gold. It was a long time before Charles Markham restored the beautiful gem to its box, and again dived into the muff pocket.

"Here's another present, Sancho. Ribbon, blue as azure, and enough to tie up about ten such muffs as this. That's all. We cannot find out any more, sir, until morning, when we will call upon Messrs. B.—and Co., and see if they know who bought the ring. Come, sir! lie down on the hearth-rug. I will draw this sofa nearer to the fire, and we will sleep here. I have no desire to plunge into any of those cold rooms upstairs this night. Good-night, sir."

And, composing himself on a wide, old-fashioned sofa, his fair face nestling in a large velvet cushion of deepest crimson, the young man fell sound asleep.

Sancho sat beside him, gravely watching his face, until convinced that he was really asleep, and then stretched himself out on the rug, spread for his use beside the sofa, and was soon sharing the slumber earned by a day of railroad riding and an evening of walking.

It was late in the morning before either of the pair awoke. The fire was out, but the gas still burned, while the shutters, fast closed, excluded any ray of daylight.

Charles looked at once at his watch, gave a long whistle of amazement when he found the hands pointed to nine o'clock, and was all bustle and activity in a moment. It was not long before the shutters of an upper room were unclosed, and preparations for a toilette commenced, the heavy valise unpacked, and finer linen and more elegant garments selected to replace the handsome travelling-suit worn the day before.

"There, Sancho, I think I will be presentable to Miss M. B.," said the young man, as his toilette completed, he stood before the mirror in the bedroom. "To be sure, my nose is rather scarlet, but it would be that anyhow after I had been out a few minutes. That is one of the beauties, Sancho, of the complexion of a six months' baby in a full-grown man. But it is too late in the day to growl over that. Where are my gloves? Ah, here they are! Now, my hat. Fetch my cane from the corner, sir. That's a good dog. And now, Sancho, we will get some breakfast, and commence the search for M. B."

It was past noon when Charles Markham and Sancho stood in the drawing-room of an elegant residence, waiting for an answer to the question if one of the ladies of the house had lost an ermine muff.

"Will you please step into the sitting-room, sir?" said the servant, returning. "I will show you the way."

Motioning Sancho to wait in the hall, Charles followed the footman, unaware that he was supposed to be some poor man who expected a reward for his services, for the muff had been advertised with the promise of liberal remuneration for its return. The group in the sitting-room, an old gentleman and lady, two young ladies, and a lad of sixteen, all

looked in amazement at the gentleman following the servant.

The old lady spoke first.

"Pray be seated, sir. I hope you will pardon us for sending for you here; but we understand John to say—my daughter lost a muff yesterday—and—perhaps—"

And here the old gentleman interrupted her.

"You saw it advertised, did you not, sir?"

"I did not, sir," said Charles, courteously. "I am an entire stranger in your city, and arrived last evening. But my dog picked up a muff in the street, and I learned from B.—and Co. that a diamond ring it contained was lost and marked by them for Miss Blake."

Here the youngest of the ladies darted forward, a tiny, exquisitely pretty girl, with great hazel eyes, brown hair, and peach-like complexion.

"Harry's ring! Oh, I am so glad! Oh, thank you, sir, so much! That is my muff!"

"I am sorry it is so soiled," said Charles, as she unfolded the papers in which he had wrapped it, "but Sancho must have found it in the mud, for he carries very carefully. And you will pardon my examining the contents, but I could think of no other way to find the owner."

"Pray do not speak of that. I am so very glad it is found."

"Do not rise, sir," said the old gentleman; "I understand you to say you were a stranger here. If an old resident can be of any service, I should be most happy—for he saw at once that the offer of the advertised reward would be an insult."

Charles caught eagerly at an excuse for introducing himself. The home look and home air of everything before him was so welcome in his loneliness, that to prolong a stay for even five minutes seemed a valued privilege. So he told his name first.

"Pray, may I inquire," said the old lady, "if you are related to Rufus Markham, who left here thirty years ago?—married Mary Weaver, my dear," she explained to her husband.

"That was my father; my mother's name was Mary Weaver," said Charles, well pleased.

"Then you are related to Hugh Markham," said the old gentleman, "who died here a few weeks ago?"

"That is my errand to the city, sir," said Charles, with a disconsolate expression; "he left me his hair."

Mr. and Mrs. Blake exchanged a glance. Hugh Markham's wealth was well known.

"Sancho and I spent the night in the old house last night," said Charles, "and I suppose I must find a housekeeper and some servants, or else shut it up and get lodgings."

"All that in the future. You are our guest to-day and to-night at least—unless you have promised to eat your Christmas dinner elsewhere."

"No, indeed! Sancho and I would have sought an hotel. I would gladly accept your invitation, sir, but my dog is a guest I fear would not be welcome to ladies."

"No fear of that! Maggie here will certainly have a welcome for the finder of her muff, and Belle has a dog of her own—a superb Newfoundland, at present on a visit to a friend in the country. So that is all arranged. And now, my young friend, let me perform the introduction of my family, since you have so kindly introduced yourself. I am Samuel Blake, at your service; Mrs. Blake; our eldest daughter, Belle; Maggie, our only other child; my nephew, Gordon Blake, who is spending the holidays with us. Gordon, will you take Mr. Markham's overcoat and hat?"

But opening the door for Gordon to deposit these on the hat-rack, was followed by the stately entrance of Sancho, to Charles's great annoyance. It was all in vain to offer to put him out again; his stay was insisted upon; and Belle, who was as tall, dark, and stately as Maggie, was petite, fair, and fairy-like, took the animal's splendid head between her small hands, looking lovingly into his eyes, as if he recalled to her pleasant associations.

It was a charming day, and in the evening there was a party, which was very valuable to Charles, as his host took it upon himself to introduce the young gentleman to many of the first families in the neighbourhood, while the whisper of the recent legacy did not diminish the sensation caused by his graceful bearing and handsome though boyish face.

There were fair ladies present, and many who smiled most sweetly upon our hero, but to his eyes none were so fair as "our only other child, Maggie," with her winsome, gladsome face, and frank, sweet manners. He danced with her, and chatted with her, every moment seeing some new grace to admire.

It was late when the family were once more alone, and Mr. Blake conducted Charles to the guest chamber. The next day a family council decided that Mr. Markham must stay just where he was until the old



[SANCHO'S CHRISTMAS-BOX.]

house could be properly aired, or a pleasant boarding place found. After many discussions, the latter plan was finally decided upon, and the old house left in its gloomy loneliness.

It would take too long to tell how Charles Markham performed that ever-old, ever-new, performance, falling in love. He was so boyish yet, and so frank, that it was rather amusing to lookers-on to see how openly he did his courting. Flowers, fruit, confectionery, books, music, poured in upon Miss Maggie, who conquered him gracefully, and was just tantalising enough to keep up his ardour. Five happy weeks sped away swiftly. From the grand heights of two years' seniority and a dignified mien, Miss Belle looked down upon the lovers, and was the most charming third that was ever stationed to play propriety, becoming so absorbed in her own reveries or pursuits that the most open flirting passed utterly unheeded.

It was all like a fairy dream, and Charles was in a blissful state of love and hope, when, one evening early in February he called upon the Blakes. They were all in excitement. A very dear friend, who had been abroad upon business, was coming home unexpectedly, having met with some great success that was certainly a matter of family congratulation.

"I am sure you will like Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Markham," said Maggie, when they were all discussing the subject. "He is so pleasant, and we all feel a special—"

"Maggie!" said Belle, warningly.

"Well, we do all like him," pouted Maggie. "I'll tell him you are the exception when he comes."

"My dear!" this time the old lady spoke, and Maggie was silenced.

Still for a week Mr. Baldwin was the frequent subject of conversation, till, without knowing why, Charles grew savagely jealous of him. Maggie, with perhaps a tiny touch of *malice prepense*, was con-

tinually dwelling upon his beauty, accomplishments, wit, and the great interest she felt in him.

Yet, when the introduction came, Charles could but own many of the commendations deserved. He was an older man than himself, but a gentleman in every sense of the word. All the first evening, when both young men seemed on the footing of members of the family, Charles watched Maggie. Belle held somewhat aloof from the new arrival, but Maggie could not welcome him enough. But the blow was yet to come.

"I do not mind telling you," said the old gentleman, aside to Charles, "what is as yet a family secret. Mr. Baldwin has won away my daughter's heart, and I have consented to accept him as a son-in-law. We are very glad, for her sake, to have the engagement shortened by the unexpected good luck in his business venture."

"It must be Belle," thought Charles, trying to frame the question.

"Mr. Markham," said Mr. Baldwin, at that moment, "have you seen these views?" and he passed a picture from the table before him with his left hand.

Charles stared at it as if fascinated. There, upon the finger, was the glorious diamond he had found in the muff. "Harry's ring!" He recalled Maggie's delight in its recovery, and the initials, "M. B. to H. B."—"Margaret Blake to Harry Baldwin," of course.

For a moment the whole room grew dark, then rising, he made some hasty excuse, and went into the street. Air he must have, or strangle.

How he got home he never knew, but the morning light, creeping in, found him in the seat he had taken, dazed and bewildered, the night before.

How he had loved her, and all the time she was the affianced wife of another! Coquetry all her winning ways—falsehood all her half-admitted preferences!

False! How? He had never asked her love. It was too recent an acquaintance for that. He had sought apparently but a friend's place, and that had been frankly accorded to him. Well, it was all over; he would go away somewhere and try to forget her. He wondered in a vague way if the curse of his money was upon him: if the prospect of his great wealth had tempted Maggie to forget her absent lover for a time, and if she would have wedded his fortune if Henry Baldwin had remained away, giving him a divided, preoccupied heart for the full devotion of his own. Before night, Mrs. Crayton, the landlady, was astonished at the departure of her handsome young boarder, "bag and baggage," as she expressed it, "paying up to the full quarter the rooms were engaged for, like a gentleman as he was."

Spring passed, summer, and autumn. Winter was drawing her white mantle over the fields and hedges. Christmas beauties were being displayed in the windows, when one evening Mr. Blake announced to his family: "I met young Markham in the street to-day!"

Everybody present looked up, excepting Maggie, who looked down.

"And what do you think he is doing? He has taken that great house of his uncle's and is turning it into an Industrial School, on the model of one he saw abroad, for he has been abroad since we saw him, and means to put his entire legacy into the fund to support it, presenting the whole to the city for a Christmas gift."

"Don Quixote!" said Mrs. Baldwin.

"Well, I don't know about that. We are all aware that the money was made by usury, extortion, and various harsh means; that is a fact. Now, the young fellow told me to-day that it was left to him as a curse, and he thinks this is the best way to turn it to a blessing. I must say I agree with him."

"But has he not left himself a living?" queried the old lady.

"Not out of that money. His father left him something, and he means to open an office at once, and begin the practice of law, his profession. By the way, I invited him to the wedding on Christmas Eve. He accepted with positive ecstasy. I never saw a man's face brighten up so in all my life as his did on that invitation."

Brighten up! We should say so, indeed, for the invitation was:

"You must certainly come to Belle's wedding on Christmas Eve. She is to make Baldwin a happy man on that occasion, and will be glad to see you amongst the guests. You know I hinted something of it to you last winter."

But before the wedding day Charles made a morning call. At first Maggie declared she would never see him nor speak to him again, after the rude, abrupt way in which he had gone abroad, but at last she consented to go down. Mamma and Belle were so busy with wedding preparations, that there was no one else to see the visitor.

What Charles said to make all clear I scarcely know; but he learned the heart he coveted was all his own, though pride had covered up the fact from all others.

"It was the ring deceived me, Maggie," pleaded the lover, when she scolded him for his mistake. "It was in your muff."

"Well, may not a sister do an errand for another sister? I was only carrying it to Belle."

"But the lettering, Maggie?"

"The lettering?"

"M. B. to H. B."

"Well! Mabel Blake to Henry Baldwin."

"Mabel! I thought of course your sister's name was Isabelle."

There was a gay wedding on Christmas Eve, and the little bridesmaid wore a new ring, while upon the finger of one guest glittered a diamond of pure water—a mate to one worn by the bridegroom.

"The stones were left to the girls by an aunt," said Mr. Blake, "to be set for a ring for their husbands if they ever had them. You will find one more in Maggie's possession, but Belle had her duplicate set for a guard to her wedding ring."

"Four such stones as these!" cried Charles. "Yes, they were left by royalty to an ancestor of ours, set as ear-rings, but they have been reset before this and will, I trust, long be worn in their present shape."

"And next Christmas Eve I may give Maggie a ring to wear under a guard like Belle's?"

"Whow! Only a year to become a judge!"

Yet it is so understood in the family. Already busy needles make dainty articles to lay away in mysterious drawers, and when Charles pays visits to the Industrial School, already well filled and in active operation, a little figure at his side is often pointed out as Mr. Markham's betrothed.

Sancho, let us say, in conclusion, highly approves of his master's choice. S. A. F.



[AMANDA DEPRIVED.]

DANGEROUS GROUND;
OR,
SHE WOULD BE A COUNTESS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Heart's Content," "Tempting Fortune," &c., &c.

CHAPTER VII.

"I am of a constitution so general, that it consorts and sympathiseth with all things; I have no antipathy, or rather idiosyncrasy, in anything. Those natural repugnances do not touch me, nor do I behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spanish, or Dutch.—*Religio Medicis.*

The Countess of Montargis, on receiving an intimation from her footman to the effect that Miss Amanda Garraway was within and at her ladyship's service, descended the steps of the carriage and entered the house, being shown into the apartment dignified by the name of drawing-room because it contained superior articles of furniture carefully covered over with brown holland, and was only used on state occasions. It was cold and cheerless, and open to a charge of dampness.

Jane ushered the countess into the room, and apologised for the momentary absence of her sister, who, she said, would wait upon her directly, the fact being that Amanda, with pardonable vanity, was desirous of making as favourable an impression upon her ladyship as she could, and had gone upstairs to change her dress and smooth her hair, the visit of the countess, being totally unexpected, having caught her in a somewhat untidy condition. First impressions are everything, and this Amanda knew well; therefore she resolved to give a lady whom she wished to secure as a patroness no excuse for finding fault with her.

With a slight inclination of the head, the countess acknowledged Jane's excuse for her sister's absence, and said:

"I can wait," almost immediately afterwards turning her back upon her, and examining some badly-executed photographs of John Short and his wife, taken upon glass, which, in garish-looking frames, adorned the wall opposite the door.

Taking this as a hint that her presence was no longer required, and that their distinguished visitor was not inclined to enter into conversation, Jane discreetly withdrew.

Her ladyship was rather above the middle height, having a figure wonderful for its perfect symmetry, which was well set off by a tightly-fitting bodice, dimly visible through the mazy fretwork of a magni-

fcent lace shawl. She could not have been less than forty years of age, yet her lovely features were in an excellent state of preservation, and from their then existing beauty, spoke eloquently of the charms of the past, which had made her the belle of the season, and secured as a husband for her the wealthy Earl of Montargis, who had just then succeeded to the title by the death of his brother and the mysterious disappearance of that brother's son. She was dark as the night. Though her complexion was dazzlingly white there was a subdued fire in her black, flashing eyes, which spoke of the spirit she had always at her command when aroused. Her glossy hair was like a raven's plume, and her every motion full of grace, elegance, and dignity.

If her manner was a little less conciliatory than it might have been, if she was proud and haughty, and did not look with kindly feeling upon those inferior to her, perhaps the fault was in her education and the associations of her daily life. She did not know the meaning of poverty. Suffering had always been absent from her home. She possessed the love of her husband, who, if he did not realise her ideal in every shape, was nevertheless indefatigable in his endeavours to render her happy.

It was with something like contempt, not unmixed with wonder, that her ladyship examined the drawing-room, which John and his wife Jane thought such a miracle of good taste and neatness. The tawdry German prints, in colours, which hung on the walls, she turned from with horror; they contrasted so strangely, to her cultivated taste, with the masterpieces of ancient and modern art with which the Montargis saloons abounded. The members of John Short's family who had called in the aid of the photographer to perpetuate their faces were not remarkable for their beauty, and when she came to the row of family portraits, her ladyship smiled again.

Certainly the room was clean, for Jane was an avowed enemy to dirt, but that was all that could be said in its favour. There was more furniture in it than it could properly hold, and that was badly arranged, while the dull level of inferiority was not relieved by a single shrub or flower, and rather aggravated than not by a few branches of artificial roses and chrysanthemums—an odd mixture—which were stuck in hideous vases, such as dealers in old clothes exchange for left-off articles of wearing apparel.

While her ladyship was yet engaged in the congenial task of criticism, the door opened and Amanda made her appearance. She did not make a low courtesy, such as the Countess of Montargis had expected,

but with a fearless though respectful demeanour advanced to within a few feet of her visitor, and, without any symptom of fear or trembling, began to speak upon the subject of her ladyship's visit, exhibiting therein a self-possession which was astonishing to the aristocratic critic, who from the appearance of the house and its surroundings, had expected nothing better at most than a nursery governess or an upper servant, ambitious of improving her condition.

"I beg your ladyship's pardon for keeping you waiting," exclaimed Amanda. "But I was at the top of the house, going through some accounts for my brother-in-law, who is a very good tradesman, though a poor mathematician; but we must not be hard on those who have not had the advantages of education, for if my father had not been rather lavish in his expenditure upon me I should not now have had the honour of receiving a visit from your ladyship."

The countess took a chair, and pointing to another, said:

"You can sit down. I do not require you to stand while you are addressing me."

"I did not intend to do so," replied Amanda, boldly. "I must apologise again for not asking you to be seated, for I may say that I am in my own house, and the duty of setting my visitors at their ease rests with me. I hope you will not be offended at the freedom of my language, Lady Montargis, but I can see that you have formed an erroneous estimate of me, and that you are in doubt as to whether I shall or can possibly be a fit companion or instructress for your daughters. I beg to assure you that every word I stated in my advertisement is strictly matter of fact. I can play, and sing, and have a thorough knowledge of French and English, though I cannot boast of my German, my studies in which language having been somewhat elementary. I did not think that I should have been under the painful necessity of advertising for an engagement, but my poor father has been very unfortunate, and I cannot burden my brother-in-law with my maintenance, for on him the weight devolves."

"Will you allow me to ask you, without thinking me impertinent or curious, who and what your friends were, at what school you were placed, and any matter of family history concerning yourself which you may be disposed to favour me with, as well as the references you are in a position to give me, should I determine upon taking you into my service?"

"If you should honour me so far as to engage me, Lady Montargis," said Amanda, with a mildly satiric

cal accent by way of correction, "you will find Miss Gillingham, of Upton Park House, near here, willing and able to give you an account of the poor attainments and powers I possess, and for which I am indebted to her. My father was a farmer on the estate of Mr. Merrivale Dashwood, by whom he has been very badly treated. The rector of Nunninton is well acquainted with us, and when you mention my father's name, which is Mr. Thomas Garraway, and that of my brother-in-law, Mr. John Short, I think you will be told that they are both guarantees of my respectability, while I sincerely trust that you will consider and find that Miss Gillingham is a sufficient recommendation for the fitness of the post for which I have advertised."

"I am obliged to you," answered the countess, who had written down the names given her upon some ivory tablets, which she replaced in a pocket of her dress. "It is as well not to act hastily in these matters, and if you will allow me a few days to make the necessary inquiries, Miss Garraway, I will not fail to communicate with you. My girls, I may tell you, are two in number, and have never been to school. Their late governess has left on account of ill-health, and it is owing to the necessity for filling up her place that I have, amongst others, replied to your public application for employment. The salary I am prepared to give to a competent person is fifty pounds a year. I shall drive now to Upton Park House. Good morning."

There was no bell in the room, and Amanda was obliged to open the door and show the countess the way out, which act of courtesy she acknowledged by an inclination of the head. Her footman was at the street-door, and assisted her into the carriage, which quickly drove away, amidst the excitement of the neighbours, who thought that John Short had been having recourse to magic to secure so fashionable and distinguished a customer, for her ladyship's carriage was well known in Nunninton, Montargis Park being only a few miles distant, and the wealth and grandeur of its inmates a matter of notoriety to all.

When Amanda returned to her friends, she was overwhelmed with questions, but she was discreet enough to make evasive replies, and not to speak confidently of her ladyship's visit, the result of which was yet problematical. They wished her success, but she could see from their manner that they thought her chance a poor one.

A fortnight passed, and she heard nothing from Montargis Park, which made her spirits sink to the lowest possible ebb, more especially as she had not received any more applications in answer to her advertisement. One morning, however, a letter, bearing a coronet on the seal, reached her through the post, and she was delighted to find that it was from the countess, who told her that her reference was satisfactory, and that the report she had received from her late school-mistress was such as to induce her to offer her an engagement for six months. She requested her to come to the Park at her earliest convenience.

Amanda was now able to hold up her head and speak with confidence of the future. It was the height of her ambition to be independent, and to associate with ladies and gentlemen. Who knew but that she might make an advantageous match? She knew that the Earl of Montargis had a son, and she even dared to hope that she might find favour in the eyes of the young Lord Mayland, who was just of age, and likely to be susceptible of feminine charms such as she flattered herself she possessed. This was a dream which she kept to herself, for she well knew that her friends would ridicule her for indulging such an ambitious project.

Farmer Thomas Garraway parted with his daughter with regret. He had been very grave and cast down ever since his departure from the farm, and though he never mentioned Fanny's name, it was evident to all that he thought much of her and speculated deeply as to her fate. She was his youngest, and he had always been fonder of her than of the others. It was a cruel blow to him to lose her in so mysterious a manner, and she would have been cut to the heart if she could have witnessed his silent distress. Though Jane was ever kind and attentive to him, and showed her parents more substantial and unvarying proofs of affection than his eldest and youngest daughters, he, with a strange caprice of nature, loved her least. She knew this, but it made no alteration in her dutiful behaviour, which was unexceptionable and beyond praise.

He was proud of Amanda, and wished her success in an avocation for which he was almost afraid she was not fitted. She promised to write to them all at Nunninton frequently, but begged that they would not call unless she invited them, as she did not know whether their visits would be agreeable to the noble family among whom her lot was to be cast for the next few months, if not longer.

It was her firm determination to do all she could

to maintain herself in her new position. She had heard that there is a skeleton in every house, the meaning of which she interpreted to be, that every family has its own secret or secrets, and the higher the position of the family the more profound and dangerous was often the mystery. It was not improbable to her romantic mind that this great and lofty house of Montargis had its secret. If so, why should she not be able to gain possession of it? She would not have considered it derogatory to her dignity to listen at doors when people were talking, to read private letters when no one was watching her, and to pick up scraps of information here and there, however contemptible the means she would be compelled to employ. In fact, at an early age she was designing and a schemer—one whom it was dangerous to admit into anyone's house, and to whom it would have been fatal folly to confide any matter of importance, for she would not have hesitated to betray the trust imposed in her had she considered it to her interest to do so.

With a scanty wardrobe and a slender purse she went to Montargis Park. She dressed chiefly in black, and was always neat and ladylike. The servants at once took a dislike to her, for her manner was unconciliatory, and she asserted her position in an unmistakable manner when the lady-maids endeavoured to place themselves on friendly terms with her. She had her own apartments, and though it was intimated to her that she might frequent the drawing-room in the evening if she chose to do so, she invariably refused, unless she was expressly solicited to do so by the pupils, or sent for to play on the piano, or sing.

The ladies Gwendoline and Selina Mayland were very unlike each other in appearance and disposition. The former was proud and haughty, dark and stately as her mother, while the latter reminded her precursors of the lost Fanny—she was so gentle in her manner, and cheerful and obliging to all with whom she came in contact. They did not, either of them, tyrannise over Amanda, or give her unnecessary trouble, but there was this difference in their treatment of her—Gwendoline would seldom condescend to speak to her on matters not connected with her scholastic duties, while Selina was pleased to come into her sitting-room and talk to or read with her. Amanda, on her part, endeavoured to make a favourable impression on all those who were worth impressing, and, with this end in view, she was particularly civil and obliging to the earl whenever they came in contact.

The Earl of Montargis was upwards of fifty years of age, very quiet and retiring in his manner, never appearing in public if he could help it, and amusing himself with the simple and congenial pursuit of farming. He was a justice of the peace, but he seldom attended to his magisterial duties unless a poacher had to be prosecuted, for he was a strict game-preserved, and detected a poacher from the bottom of his heart. In politics he was a Tory, though he had always refused to serve his party in Parliament, and he permitted his tenants to vote as best pleased them, being much too liberal to coerce them in matters of conscience. He was not a man of violent likes and dislikes, and would make any sacrifice to obtain a quiet and peaceful life. It was chiefly owing to this indolence and want of energy that his wife was permitted to have her own way in everything. So long as she did not trouble him he allowed her to do precisely as she liked.

His son, Lord Mayland, partook of his father's ideas and idiosyncrasies in no small degree. He was fond of farming and of shooting, and was, in addition to that, a great reader. He looked forward to a parliamentary career, but intended to fit himself for the duties of a legislator by severe and careful study before he sought the suffrages of a constituency.

There were times when the Earl of Montargis was inaccessible to everybody. He would shut himself up in his study, or take long rambling walks in the fields or woods, his manner wild and excited, himself abstracted from the world and its business, and evidently the prey of unpleasant and exasperating reflections. What those reflections were no one knew. Even the countess was not in his confidence, and Lord Mayland could only put his father's conduct down to eccentricity, or a slight aberration of intellect, which would occur periodically.

Amanda noted this well.

She had not been many weeks at Montargis Park before she found the key to the characters of all its inmates, and she would frequently spend hours of the long winter evenings silent and solitary in the sitting-room they had given her, and wonder what the cause might be of the old peer's melancholy. That she should discover it sooner or later she was convinced, and she hoped fervently that there was a secret connected with the house of Montargis, by gaining possession of which she could make her fortune; and certainly the circumstances surround-

ing the family gave some strength and consistency to her romantic ideas.

She never lost an opportunity of trying to make a favourable impression upon Lord Mayland, but he took no notice of her, treating her with the commonest civility, making her feel, without perhaps wishing to do so, that she was but a dependent on the household, belonging to a different class to himself, and hired by the money of his father and mother to teach his sisters. He was of a studious turn of mind, and his books had more charm for him than a woman's eyes, however bright and eloquent, and he would rather read a sound practical treatise on farming than listen to Amanda's really excellent interpretation of the admired music of the most celebrated Italian masters. Oddly enough, his indifference only made Amanda the more anxious to captivate him. Her task was a difficult one. There was no sympathy between them, and she feared to put in practice those arts of coquetry which a woman has always at command, and knew so well how to use, lest she might attract the attention of his lady mother, whose quick perception would enable her to see what she was doing, and probably secure her dismissal in a summary, if not ignominious, manner from the park.

In the spring of the following year the young ladies were to be introduced into fashionable society. The countess had told Amanda that if she was satisfied with her conduct, which had up to that time been unexceptionable, she should accompany the family to town for the season, and continue to be the companion and occasional instructor of the girls, for which promise Amanda was thankful, as it was her wish, at all hazards, to remain an inmate of the household, and it was strange that events soon took place which gave her quick and active brain as much work as it had covetous, and brought her talent for intrigue into immediate action, much to her delight, for she was not one of those who care about leading a quiet and humdrum existence, undisturbed from day to day and from year to year.

CHAPTER VIII.

As, to the Autumn breeze's bugle sound,
Various and vague the dry leaves dance their round;
Or, from the garner-door, on either borne,
The chaff flies devious from the winnow'd corn;
So vague, so devious, at the breath of heaven,
From their fix'd aim are mortal counsels driv'n.

Anonymous.

AMONG the numerous scraps of the history of the Montargis family were several of a nature sufficiently interesting for Amanda to preserve, when she had with diligence and assiduity collected them. These scraps, when put together, made an intelligible narrative, which was as follows:

Hubert, Earl of Montargis, the possessor of the title, was a younger brother, and would not have succeeded if his relative, who was the heir-at-law, had not died a few weeks before his father breathed his last. This brother, whose name was Stanley, had a son, a child but a few years old, and this boy disappeared in a remarkable manner. It was thus that Hubert became Earl of Montargis.

There were uncharitable people who said that Hubert knew more about the mysterious vanishing of the child than anyone else, but as the boy's mother died soon afterwards, overwhelmed with grief at the almost simultaneous loss of her beloved husband and darling child, there was no one to prosecute inquiries respecting the latter, whose fate became quickly forgotten, except by the busybodies who lived in the immediate vicinity of Montargis Park.

Of course, if this child—christened Stanley, after his father—should happen to be alive, he was the heir to the title and estates. He could claim them, and, on proving his identity, dispossess the earl, who would be a mere usurper. This made itself clear at once to Amanda's mind, and she, with her vivid imagination, had grave doubts as to the earl's fair dealing with the boy, who would, if living, now be three or four-and-twenty years of age. The earl had a direct interest in his disappearance from the scene, and if he were indeed guilty of any foul play, the remembrance of the past might prey upon his mind, making him the victim of remorse, and his fits of abstraction be thereby accounted for, as well as his terrible depression and melancholy.

It was Amanda's custom to take a walk every morning, when the weather would permit her; sometimes she was accompanied by her pupils, and occasionally she went alone. On a fine day in December she had put on a bonnet and shawl to go out as usual. Gwendoline was engaged in the perusal of a book which she found so interesting that she could not leave it, and Selina was suffering from a slight cold.

"If you are going near the village, Miss Garraway," exclaimed the countess, "I shall feel obliged by your taking a few little parcels to pensioners of mine, and saying kind words as you deliver them."

"Gladly," replied Amanda, with cheerful acquiescence. "Have you the basket ready? If so I will start at once, and do my best to support your ladyship's charitable reputation."

The countess gave her a basket which was not too heavy to be carried on the arm, containing little packets of groceries, money, and small books of a religious tendency. Though not ostentatiously poor, the Countess of Montargis was of a benevolent disposition, and the poor of the neighbouring village of Fonthills had cause to thank her for her substantial gifts all the year round. Many had she relieved from positive want, many had she helped into prosperity by timely loans and presents, and it was her pride and her boast to know all the inhabitants of Fonthills, and to be at all times willing to lend an ear to their tales of genuine distress.

With a light heart and an elastic step, Amanda set out on her journey, tripping gaily along through the crisp frosty air, which fanned her usually pale face into a ruddy glow.

Fonthills was not more than two miles and a half distant from the "House," as the princely abode of Lord Montargis was called, and she quickly traversed half the distance. She paused a moment to rest the basket, which proved to be heavier than she had expected, on a stile, and was surprised to hear voices coming in her direction. That of one of the speakers she instantly recognised as belonging to the Earl of Montargis, and in obedience to a cunning instinct peculiarly her own, she slipped behind the trunk of a broad and ancient elm, which effectually hid her from view. In this hiding place she could hear all that was said, if, as she hoped and imagined, the speakers would halt for a time before the stile.

She was the more anxious to catch whatever stray words might be borne towards her because the earl had, for the last two days, been in one of his melancholy moods, speaking to no one, and absenting himself from the family circle. His brow had been dark and gloomy, and he had muttered to himself in an inarticulate manner, giving every indication that his mind was the prey of dangerous thoughts.

When he came near enough for Amanda to see his face, she remarked that it was much agitated, and bore traces of having been disturbed by passion. While talking he gesticulated wildly, and his air was more impudent than she had usually remarked it.

His companion was a young man, about four-and-twenty, having a singularly handsome countenance, which, however, was devoid of any intellectual expression whatever. Occasionally it would light up with a transient gleam, but, as a rule, it represented utter vacuity. His hair was dark, and hung in fantastic, curling locks down his neck. His clothes were neither new nor fashionable, and from their shabby, and even dirty look, he did not seem to care much about his personal appearance, which was untidy in the extreme.

It was evident from his deferential manner that he was well acquainted with the earl, and stood somewhat in fear of him, for his eye quailed beneath that of Lord Montargis, and when the latter raised his voice he trembled, as if he dreaded a recourse to actual violence.

Stopping at the foot of the stile, as Amanda had anticipated, the earl exclaimed to his companion, who halted within a few paces of him, and occupied himself in breaking into several small pieces the branch of a hazel bush which grew very near to his hand:

"I have told you before, Maxwell, and I tell you again, that I will not have you coming up to the House after me. You have your lodgings in the village, and Mr. Nodes sends you from London what money you require. If you mention my name as your friend and patron, and persist in following me about, I shall have to send you back to the Red House, which I should be sorry to do, as I know your antipathy to it."

"No, no!" cried the young man addressed as Maxwell, his face exhibiting intense horror, "you shall not do that. I will not speak of you or come on your ground, though I love to wander in these wild woods and through these spacious meadows."

"Well, begone, and let me see no more of you," said the earl, from whose brow the dark shadow fell.

"Keep to the village, and let no one extract any particulars of your former history from you, or dread the worst. You know that my resentment is terrible when aroused, and you have before this had abundant cause to fear me. I never break my word, and if you disobey me I will as certainly punish you as there is a sky above us. Here is a sovereign for you. Go, and remember what I have said to you."

Maxwell took the money with as much pleasure as a child would have exhibited in receiving a present from its parent or guardian, and, promising compliance with the earl's commands, walked quickly along the path which led to Fonthills, while Lord Montargis, after looking after him for about half a minute, got over the stile and returned to his house.

Waiting until the earl had become lost to sight by a bend in the pathway, Amanda hastened on after the young man, in whom she began to take a great interest. Who was he? and why did the Earl of Montargis take the trouble to caution him not to mention his name, and to keep off his property? There was evidently some mystery about the matter, which she was anxious to probe to the bottom. She ran until she was out of breath, and the spire of Fonthills Church was just visible through the trees, when she overtook Maxwell, who was apparently hurrying away from the ground where he was told not to trespass.

Having reached him, she politely accosted him, asking the way to the village. He stared rudely at her without replying, as if he did not thoroughly hear or understand her, and she had to repeat the question before he waved his hand in the direction of the church spire, and strode on. She was at a loss to account for this strange behaviour, but did not venture to speak to him again. It was unusual for her to be treated unceremoniously by any man, as her pretty face generally secured civility, if not unqualified admiration. As she proceeded on her way, she repeated the two names which had fallen from the earl during his conversation with the stranger bearing over whom he had such an influence. These were Maxwell, and Nodes, of London. These names were the key to an enigma, and she would not have forgotten them on any account.

Fonthills lay in a hollow, and was protected by hills which rose on the north and east, while an undulating expanse of table-land stretched out towards the south-west. It was a pretty and picturesque hamlet, entirely the property of the Earl of Montargis. The family worshipped in the parish church on Sunday, and contributed largely to the charities which the benevolence of former times had established.

Amanda looked at the addresses on the parcels, and distributed them to the fortunate recipients of the bounty of the countess. The last on the list was an elderly widow named Betty Nason, who was a great gossip and inveterate scandal-monger. Amanda was well aware of her unenviable reputation, and felt convinced that if anyone knew anything about Maxwell, it would be the old woman. Accordingly she gave her the dole of which she was the bearer, and added a few shillings out of her own private purse, begging permission to rest awhile in the humble cottage inhabited by Betty, and which, thanks to the generosity of the countess, she was in her old age permitted to occupy rent free. It was her intention to put a few judicious questions to the aged pensioner, to which she knew she should have long and discursive replies.

Mrs. Nason was only too glad to be honoured by a lady's presence, and dusted a chair with her apron for her visitor to sit down upon, saying:

"Poor is the best accommodation I can offer you, miss, but such as it is you're welcome to it, and once more may the Lord prosper you and those that sent you for your kindness and charity to an old woman. Ah! it's well for those to have riches that make so good a use of them."

"I am told you know everyone, Mrs. Nason," said Amanda. "Can you tell me anything respecting a Mr. Maxwell who lives in Fonthills? I met him accidentally to-day, and I should like to know who and what he is."

Mrs. Nason smiled as she replied:

"You could not have come to a better person for information, my dear young lady, as Mr. Maxwell lodges in my cottage, and has done so for this last six months. Poor gentleman! he's not quite right in his head, and came out of an asylum before he came here—so I'm told—and he's given dreadfully to drinking, which is the ruin of anyone who gives himself up to it. He's quite a gentleman, though, when he chooses to be so, and I've always found him very harmless. He never talks to or makes a friend of anybody, and his chief pleasure when he gets his money—which he does monthly—is to go about from place to place drinking. Who he is, or what he is, I know no more than a child."

Amanda did not think it worth while to pursue this unprofitable line of examination, and, thanking the old woman for permitting her to rest herself, she took her departure, and went back to Montargis Park.

CHAPTER IX.

Like souls that balance joy and pain,
With tears and smiles from heaven again,
The maiden Spring upon the plain
Came in a sunlit fall of rain.

In crystal vapour everywhere
Blue isles of heaven laugh'd between,
And, far in forest-deeps unseen,
The topmost elms tree gather'd green
From draughts of balmy air. Sir Launcelot.

CHRISTMAS passed without any exceptional display on the part of the Earl and Countess of Montargis,

who were satisfied with two family parties, one general reception, and a ball. That season of festivity had been looked forward to by Amanda as an opportunity to meet with some gentleman or nobleman from whom she would possibly receive attentions. She was disappointed, for no one took any particular notice of her, and her singing and playing were both eclipsed by some friends of the Ladies Gwendoline and Selina Mayland.

It was with positive relief that she heard the Countess of Montargis announce her intention of going to London early in May, and she looked forward with anxiety to the spring, which would bring with it a change of scene for her, and a crowd of new associations, which could not fail to be agreeable to a girl of her age and ambitious designs. She was of obscure origin herself, as the phrase goes, but she had heard dozens of well-authenticated instances of girls who went out into the world and made good marriages, even becoming allied to the ancient and haughty peerage of Great Britain.

Large sums of money were spent by the Earl of Montargis in redecorating his town house, which was situated in Eaton Square, and plenty of work was given to the best milliner at the West-End, who had to supply the Ladies Gwendoline and Selina Mayland with the newest fashions, for their mother well knew the charm that a well-dressed woman exercises over all with whom she comes in contact.

The season was a very brilliant one. Parliament met early. The court set the example of extravagance and display in giving costly parties, balls, and dinners, and the aristocracy—the richest in the world—emulated the example thus set, with a recklessness of expenditure which diminished many a rent-roll, but added to the splendid gaiety of "the season," and sent their names trumpeted on the tongues of fame to the uttermost limits of the domain of fashion. Among these the Earl and Countess of Montargis were distinguished. The occasion was a grand one, that of the introduction of their daughters to society, and they spared no expense, for it was the dearest wish of their parents to see them married to husbands in their own sphere, and who could number on their coats-of-arms as many quarterings as themselves.

Madame Glavelli was the name of the milliner to whom they confided the preparation of their toilette, and on the morning of a great ball, which the Earl of Montargis was about to give in the evening, this fashionable modiste sent one of her assistants into Eaton Square with a box containing a couple of skirts, which she wished to submit for their approval before it was too late to alter them. Many hands had been employed all day and part of the night for some time on these miracles of the dressmaker's art, but there was no trace on the splendid material of the fatigue, exhaustion, and the weary, bitter tears shed by the sleepless eyes of the overtasked workers.

A servant helped the little milliner to take the boxes containing the dresses out of the cab in which she had come, and they were placed in a morning-room, to which the Ladies Gwendoline and Selina descended, accompanied by Amanda, their mamma being occupied upstairs with the groom of the chambers, attending to the decorations of the ball-room, but promising to join them shortly.

The little milliner opened the boxes, and their contents were exposed to view. But Amanda did not care to gaze at them; her regards were fascinated by the milliner, in whom she recognised her missing sister Fanny, who was much altered. She was thinner than formerly, and her face bore the traces of severe suffering, but there was still the sparkle in the eye, and, though sedate and grave, she seemed to have some hope in the future.

The ladies were lost in admiration of the dresses, which were exceptionally magnificent and splendid. Selina, wondering why Amanda did not join in her critical approbation, called her by name. This caused Fanny to look up, and the eyes of the sisters met. Fanny's face exhibited the utmost surprise and terror. She was about to speak, when a warning glance and a movement of the hand, of a threatening and imploring nature combined, restrained her.

As she moved to the table and passed her sister, Amanda whispered:

"Don't speak now. I will come and see you. Be a stranger. I have my reasons."

This was enough for Fanny, who obeyed her eldest sister, marvelling nevertheless, how she came to meet her in the household of the Countess of Montargis. She knew her to be a woman of the world, and was content to do as she was told by her, but Amanda fancied she detected a feeling of relief on her face, arising from a wish not to be questioned. A quick, vivid flush had come into Fanny's cheeks when their eyes met. Was it the flush of shame? She had no further opportunity to continue her investigations, because both Lady Gwendoline and Lady Selina asked her a dozen questions respecting their

dresses, they having an excellent opinion of her taste, which, indeed, was perfect.

It answered her purpose to find some fault with the dressmaker's skill, and she volunteered to return to Madame Glavelli's with the young milliner, and order certain alterations to be made. To this the ladies made no objection, and, quickly dressing herself, Amanda joined her sister in the cab, to which the dresses had been re-conveyed in their long and shallow cardboard boxes.

Amanda did not speak kindly or shake her sister by the hand when the cab started, rattling over the stones, and making a detectable noise with its ill-fitting windows. She spoke sharply and abruptly, saying :

"How comes it that you are working for a miliner? What have you been doing since you left home, and why did you leave?"

Fanny averted her eyes, and replied, in a meek voice, the result of long suffering, apparently:

"I can tell you nothing. I have my secret, and it will remain one. Do not press me, do not ask me any questions, for I can make you no satisfactory answer. If I had known that I should meet you at the Earl of Montargis's house, I would not have come, for I voluntarily separated myself from my family, and—"

"You are ashamed to meet them? Well, be it so," interrupted Amanda. "If you will not gratify my pardonable curiosity you cannot restrain my imagination from exercising itself at your expense. You lay yourself open to all sorts of injurious suspicions."

"I am content that you shall think what you like, at present," answered Fanny.

The cab was not long in reaching its destination, a strict silence being preserved between the sisters during the remainder of the journey. Fanny with difficulty kept herself from crying, as she was overwhelmed with home recollections, and Amanda saw tears in her eyes. If she had exhibited a little sympathy she might have gained her sister's confidence, just as her father might have done in days gone by, but she spoke no word which could induce the poor girl to confide in her.

Fanny went into the work-room, on her arrival at the shop, without holding out her hand to her sister, who was met by Madame Glavelli, and treated by her with the utmost respect. Amanda suggested a few trifling alterations, after which she said, in a low tone :

"I happen to be acquainted with the features of your workwoman, who brought the dresses to Eaton Square. She is a native of Nunninton, in the neighbourhood of which Montargis Park is situated, and if the character she now bears is no better than it was when she lived there I do not think she is the proper sort of person to be in your employ. Do not mention my name, if you should think fit to dismiss her, nor, in fact, allege any special reason. You will act as you please, but keep me out of the matter."

An intimation of this sort from one in Amanda's position was equivalent to a command, and Madame Glavelli declared that she should not stop a day longer in her service, though she was forced to admit that she had found her always attentive and obliging, and a good workwoman.

As Amanda went back, she muttered to herself :

"I will not have any of my relatives prying about me. Fanny is not likely to do me any credit, and I will not risk meeting her again. My path and hers lie in different directions, and woe to her or anyone else who comes in my way!"

Her conduct was uncharitable and indefensible, but she was the slave of pride. Hers was a religion of heartlessness, and, instead of interesting herself in her sister's condition, and doing what lay in her power to alleviate it, she, by a few infamous words, pregnant with meaning, and calculated to deprive her of her means of subsistence, sought to consign her to a still lower depth of suffering.

(To be continued.)

TURNPIKES.—In 1836 the bonded debt on turnpike trusts in England and Wales exceeded 7,000,000L. In 1864 that amount was reduced to little more than 4,000,000L. There were, however, at the latter date arrears of interest which probably exceeded 500,000L. The Commissioners of Roads for Scotland have greatly improved the turnpike system by the appointment of "road boards," by the consolidation of various trusts, and the assessment of counties. In Ireland turnpike gates were never numerous; but of late years they have been utterly abolished, and the money required for road purposes is raised by a county cess or rate. In no country in the world are there better highways than in the sister isle, and yet the cost of keeping them in repair is much below that paid in England. There are about 50,000 miles of roads in Ireland, and these are maintained at an annual cost of 500,000L, being at the rate of 10L per mile. The average cost

in this country is 32L per mile. The bonded debt of England and Wales is estimated at 4,000,000L. The current value of this debt is 3,000,000L. It is the decided conviction of many public men who have paid attention to this subject that it might be liquidated by the annual payment by Parliament of 180,000L for twenty-five years.

SCIENCE.

SOME interesting experiments have taken place at Perm, with a new 20in. gun, cast in the foundry of that town. The trials made with this gun, under the direction of Major-General Pestitch, commandant of the Cronstadt artillery, are described in the official reports as having been very successful, and more satisfactory in their results than had been the case with American guns of the same calibre. The gun was fired 314 times; the projectile weighs 10 cwt., and the charge of powder required for each shot was 130lb. The weight of the gun is about 50 tons, the recoil 7ft., the initial velocity of the projectile 1,120ft. per second, and the percussion force, at a distance of 50ft., about 10,000 tons. The official papers say that this is "the most powerful gun in Europe."

IRON TRADE ON THE WEST COAST.—The near approach of the period when the Bessemer royalties will expire is exercising considerable influence upon the hematite iron trade, though, for a similar reason, those actually engaged in the steel manufacture are not similarly affected at present, as buyers of steel rails, &c., are holding back their orders, when practicable, with a view of securing easier terms in the spring. We cannot believe that there is much in this, as it is more than probable prices of steel will show a sudden advance next year, in consequence of the heavy demand being more than enough to supply all the existing works with employment. Rumours are afloat that Bessemer steel works are likely to be erected at Carnforth, Askrum, and Millom. The Furness Steel and Iron Company have foundations laid for steel works, but the depression in trade and the heavy royalties caused them to postpone their new works.

PRACTICAL SILVER SAVING.—Mr. J. C. Brown gives a novel but excellent hint for silver saving. He says:—"Almost every photographer has some special way of his own for saving silver from the developing solution, but I doubt if a more primitive or effectual plan has ever been hit upon than one adopted by a photographer, of no mean reputation, that I met during my travels this summer. The whole apparatus was nothing more than an old felt hat without holes, arranged upon a frame of four sticks over the developing tray, similar to a funnel. Plates were developed into the hat, which, from the porous condition of the felt, allowed all the solution to filter through, but not before all the silver had been precipitated by the continued action of the iron. After a season's work the hat was burned and the silver recovered. Simple as well as effective appliances are what photographers desire, and this certainly deserves a trial, even at the sacrifice of an old felt hat."

MACKIE'S STEAM TYPE COMPOSING AND DISTRIBUTING MACHINE.—In no branch of invention has there been less practical ingenuity shown than in that of composing type for letterpress printing. We say practical, for again and again we have seen and heard of type-composing and distributing machines at exhibitions, but they all seem to have departed this life—at least, none has obtained a place in a London printing-office. They have all been too complicated and frail for every-day work; beautiful some of them as ornaments for an exhibition, but possessed of too many springs, elastics, tapes, and the like for general use. Among the many inventors of late years, Mr. Mackie, proprietor of the *Warrington Guardian*, is likely to hold a leading place. Mr. Mackie summarises the advantages of his machine as follows: All brain-work, except "justification," may be done anywhere, and by persons who never need see a type. Narrow paper is perforated by a tiny machine with fourteen keys only for 140 kinds of letters, and twenty keys for 400. This perforating can be done at the rate of a *Times* column of minion per hour. The composer is driven by steam, by foot, or hand, and when the endless perforated paper is attached to it, it works automatically. The justification is done in the usual way, by hand labour at present. The paper used for the perforations may be old copies of the *Times*; new paper costs one penny per column. Errors are reduced to a minimum. The composing machine makes none, and the perforating only when the operator is careless. Duplicates may be perforated at one time, and lent, sold, or used on two or more machines, and for different sizes of type. The perforated paper may be used years after for future and corrected editions. Stereotyping is, therefore, not needed.

One edition may be set in, say, nonpareil, and another in picas from the same perforations. Small type is set with the same rapidity as large. An author may do his own perforations, and thus save the chief cost of his work. Intelligent women may perforate at home for offices any distance away. Authors may send perforated slips instead of "early sheets" abroad, and by putting on a number of composing machines a foreign publisher might have an ordinary volume out in a day or two.

A SPECIMEN OF OUR "WOODEN WALLS."

Her Majesty's wooden corvette *Druid*, 10 guns, 1,322 tons, and possessing nominal steam power to the extent of 350 horses, was taken from Sheerness harbour to the measured mile on the Maplin Sands to try her engines and speed. The vessel had a trial previously, but was obliged to return to harbour at an early hour in consequence of its being found impossible to retain the necessary pressure of steam—30lb. to the square inch in the boilers—the cause being the leaking of the valves. Time was needed to remedy this defect, and the vessel accordingly remained in port for a few days. Although only what is termed "contractor's trial"—the vessel not having altogether come into the hands of the Government officials—much more than ordinary public importance attached to it. This arose from the fact that the Lords of the Admiralty had directed that it should be regarded as a competitive trial to test the merits of the "Griffiths' Propeller" as against those of the "Vansittart (late Lowe's) Propeller."

The *Druid*'s draught of water was 12ft. 9in. forward and 16ft. 4in. aft. Her engines and boilers are by Maudslay, Sons, and Field, the former being constructed on the horizontal principle, with jacketed cylinders, and having surface condensers. The boilers are four in number, with 16 furnaces, the boilers being fitted with patent super-heated apparatus, with flattened tubes, so that as arranged the engines can be worked with super-heated steam or not.

The screw, as before stated, was a "Griffiths," having been manufactured by the firm above named. Its diameter is 15ft.; pitch, 15ft. 2in.; length, 2ft.; and the immersion of the upper edge, 6in. The ship was fully rigged, and had all her guns and about 300 tons of coal, besides other stores, with a large quantity of iron ballast on board, together with about 200 officers and men. The sea was smooth, and the force of the wind from 1 to 3. At full-boiler power six runs were made over the mile, giving an average of 12-28 knots; at half-boiler power the average was 11-19 knots; the average number of revolutions per minute being 96-50. This was within a fraction of the estimated speed of the vessel.

On making the circles, the *Druid* proved a very handy ship, answering her helm in the readiest manner. Thus, so far as the engines and ship were concerned, everything was satisfactory, although it was again found almost impossible to retain the necessary pressure of steam. During the runs at full power, however, the condition of the ship was something unusual. She vibrated fore and aft in the most unlooked-for manner, the fore part rising up and down in the water, while the stern jerked with a lateral motion so strong that in the captain's cabin and wardroom glasses and tin pails filled with water, as a test, were speedily half-emptied of their contents.

The fore and mizzenmasts, from the step to the truck, also oscillated to such a degree that the rigging seemed to be as slack as if it had never been made taut. In fact, it was the general opinion on board that three months at sea, under such circumstances, would send her ship into dock shaken to such an extent as to require complete overhauling and repair.

THE FANCY COLOURING OF METALS.—The following receipts from a German chemist have been received in Birmingham. Recipe 1st: Dissolve 4 oz. of hyposulphite of soda in a pint and a-half of water, and then add a solution of 1 oz. acetate of lead in the same quantity of water. Articles to be coloured are placed in the mixture, which is then gradually heated to boiling point. The effect of the solution is to give iron the semblance of blue steel. Zinc becomes bronze, and copper or brass becomes successively yellowish red, scarlet, deep blue, light blue, bluish white, and finally white with a tinge of rose. This solution has no effect on lead or tin. Recipe 2nd: Replace acetate of lead in the solution by the sulphate of copper, brass becomes first of a rosy tint, then green, and finally of an iridescent brown colour. Zinc does not colour in this solution; it throws down a precipitate of brown sulphuret of copper, but if boiled in a solution containing both lead and copper it becomes covered with a black adherent crust, which may be improved by a thin coating of wax. Recipe 3rd: If the red solution be thickened with a little gum tragacanth, and pattern be traced with it on brass, which is afterwards heated to 212 degrees, and then plunged in solution No. 1, a good marked effect is produced.

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[THE ATOLL.]

ROUND THE WORLD.

EPITOME

Of opening Chapters published in EVERYBODY'S JOURNAL

AMONG the many charming residences which adorn the south-west coast of Devon, there is none more elegant and stately than that occupied by Mr. James Nugent, a retired "merchant prince," from London. Situated about half a mile from the fishing port of Brixham, everything that art could accomplish or money command had been done to make the mansion and its grounds delightful, and it must have been a delicious taste indeed that could have found anything wanting in either one or the other. The house and its appointments were simply perfect; and as for the grounds, they were as near being a paradise as human ingenuity and natural beauty could make them. In this sweet Devonshire Eden—sheltered from the rude sea breezes, while commanding a full view of the restless ocean, and in close proximity to it—when our story opens there were two persons visible, and these were in perfect keeping with the scene around them.

The one was a youth of seventeen years of age, slightly built, but vigorous and agile, possessing a form at once handsome and hardy. He was Roland, the adopted son of Mr. Nugent. His companion was a young girl, and, like himself, on the entering verge of existence, scarcely turned fifteen, and radiant with the promise of a glorious womanhood. She was Lily Nugent, the only child and heiress of the retired merchant, and the darling of her parents' hearts.

They were pacing slowly beneath the branches of the great sheltering trees, keeping in their shadow from the rays of the bright July sun; and so, with hand clasped in hand, and with hearts as free from thoughts of care as the birds singing in the boughs above them, they came to a part of the grounds which lay contiguous to the beach, and where, on a little inlet of the sea, two pleasure boats lay moored, shaded by the overhanging arms of a towering ash.

"I begin to be tired," murmured the girl, with the vivacious abruptness belonging to her years. "The Waterwitch is now in the shade, an pleasant as can be, rocking softly on the water. Let us get into it, Roland."

The proposition was promptly executed; and with lover-like alacrity on the part of the youth, for it was easy to see that love had entered already into one, at least, if not both, of these young hearts.

"Let us talk now about our future, Lily—what we will do when we are grown up," suggested Roland, removing affectionately his companion's broad-brimmed hat, which was not needed beneath the boat's awning, and so allowing her glorious wealth of golden hair to be blown about by the breeze.

"I can't look forward farther than to-night," she replied, smiling. "Papa and mamma, you know, come home to-night. Let's guess what they will bring us. I hope they won't forget our presents," she added, "because they went to London on mysterious business."

"Mysterious business?" echoed the lad.

"Yes," answered Lily. "You know I've got a dreadful uncle, who went to sea, and used to give papa endless trouble? Well, it's my belief that he has come back to plague papa in some way again."

"Oh, I hope not!" exclaimed Roland, vehemently. "I remember him quite well—a rough, bad man, who hated you bitterly when you were a child, because he feared you would prevent him from inheriting your father's wealth. He went off to sea as mate or captain of a ship, having, when a boy, made several voyages."

"Yes; I only remember seeing him twice, Roland, and I'm sure he hated me, from the look of his wicked face. And talking of ships, Roland, how noble that one looks out there, lying so still upon the water! Oh, how I wish I had the telescope here, to see what the sailors and people on board are about!"

"She is a whaler, outward bound," said Roland, who had picked up not a little nautical knowledge among the fishermen of Brixham. "I will run up to the house and fetch the telescope."

He bounded away upon his errand, while Lily sank down on the luxurious cushions of the boat, pillowing her head on one of them. She was still gazing at the vessel, wrapped in her musings, when a dark and sinister face—no doubt the wicked face she had described to Roland—was quickly thrust out from among the brushwood, and a rough, stalwart man, dressed in sailor-fashion, leaped quickly into the boat.

In a few minutes the lad's footsteps were heard returning, and in another instant he appeared standing at the edge of the beach, the picture of consternation and dismay.

The boat was gone!

A tempest of fear and agony swept over the boy's soul; but in a moment he reflected that the boat had probably become accidentally loosened from its moorings, and so drifted out to sea. He sprang into the remaining boat, and, with swift, vigorous strokes, swept out after the drifting Waterwitch. He was

not long in overtaking it. But, to his utter amazement and unutterable anguish, there was no one in it—nothing but Lily's crushed hat, a few trampled flowers, and a shred of muslin which he recognised as a portion of her dress.

Lily, herself, was gone!

Paralysed with grief, the lad sank into the bottom of the boat, and lay there, helplessly, while all the terrible consequences of Lily's loss flashed through his mind. How could he ever endure to look her father—his kind and generous protector—in the face again? How could he answer her mother's agonised inquiries for the daughter entrusted to his care? He could not live to do it. Never! And then suddenly in the darkness of his despair, there flashed up one thought. He would go away for ever! And then another thought arose, and speedily took the shape of a resolution. He would go to sea, and sever himself for ever from his dearest friends on earth, and his once happy home—happy no more for them or him, without the face of Lily.

And while the lad lay thus grief-stricken, the night had fallen, and his boat had drifted so near the outward-bound whaler that the rattle and noise on board, preparatory to her sailing, aroused him to put his resolution at once into practice. He approached the vessel cautiously, crept under the bow, seized the martingale by a desperate spring, and clambered on to the bowsprit. Thence the boy stole on board, and, unobserved in the darkness and bustle, contrived to secrete himself in the hold.

Roland Nugent, a few short hours before full of the brightest hopes of youth and love, was now become a fugitive and wretched "stowaway" on board a whaler outward bound!

The imagination of the reader will readily picture the treatment Roland Nugent received from Captain Stocks, the commander of the whaler, when he was brought before him as a "stowaway;" for the lad's discovery was, of course, not long delayed. It would be vain to describe his delirious joy when, ere long, he found that his Lily, whom he had so helplessly mourned as lost to him for ever, was actually on board the same ship with him; but in the custody of her dreaded and vindictive uncle, who was no other than Captain Stocks himself!

Many were the means essayed by Captain Stocks to subdue the defiant spirit with which Lily encountered him after recovering from the stupefaction of her grief at being so cruelly abducted from her home; and many were her unnatural uncle's acts of tyranny to her and Roland, especially when he learnt who the latter was; his villainy culminating at

length—while shrinking from compassing their death by direct means—in setting them both adrift on the lonely waste of the waters of the mid Pacific, with the prospect of a coming tempest. A terrible vengeance, truly! A fearful fate for two young creatures to encounter.

But the villainy of man does not always succeed in accomplishing its purposes according to its desired programme, the providence that overrules the actions of the good and the bad alike, not seldom intervening its controlling power to arrest the misdeeds of the evildoer, with the mandate "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." The two young creatures so pitilessly committed to what their enemy, Captain Stocks, might well think was sure destruction, possessed brave souls, and they had a firm faith in the justice of Heaven. The natural terrors of their desperate position—helpless, in a frail boat, on the wild bosom of the mighty ocean, on which they had been launched, and with every sign of a tempest ere long sweeping down on them—they could not feel acutely; but they did not despair. The young pair struggled heroically against the gloom that strove to oppress them; and maintained their cheerfulness in the face of a prospect that might well appal the stoutest hearts of the stoutest men.

The night wore on, and they resolved to let the boat drift at the mercy of the howling wind and raging sea. They kept close at the bottom, lest the mountainous waves, breaking over their frail ark, should wash them out of it. The night wore on thus; and, chilled in every limb with the sea-water that had dashed over them, Roland and Lily at length beheld the light of morning breaking over the waste of waters. They thought they had never beheld anything so glorious as those first rays of the morning sun; and with the sense of hope springing up in their hearts, even amid the desolation that surrounded them, they looked long towards the brightening horizon, and lifted prayerful thoughts to Heaven, in thankfulness for having preserved them through the perils of the night.

But the lad's heart, though brave and strong, could not but recoil and sink with apprehension when his eyes turned to scan the face of the waters. The tempest that Captain Stocks had calculated upon was surely coming, as the lad knew well from the signs of the clouds, and from the appearance of the sea—the mighty waves, black as ink and tipped with white caps of foam, rolling past with the speed of wild horses.

Roland continued his survey of the sea in silent uneasiness for several minutes; but suddenly he gave a wild shout, that equally astonished and frightened Lily, and pointed almost frantically to the horizon.

"See!" he ejaculated. "A ship! She is coming out from under the clouds! Look at her white sails—ship, Lily!—ship!"

Lily sprang to her feet.

"Where?" she cried, in a tumult of excitement. "Where is it, Roland? I can't see it."

The lad caught her round the waist, to steady her swaying figure and assist her gaze.

"There, to the north!" he cried, "in the line of that monster wave. Do you see her now, Lily?"

Lily's eyes followed his outstretched hand, and speedily she beheld a stately ship coming out from under a black bank of clouds, as it were, with all its sails set, and gleaming in the light.

"I see it now!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Roland! it's Captain Stocks' vessel—it's the *Dolphin*!"

The ship was not so far off but Roland's eye could soon discover that it was not that of their enemy. A very short time sufficed to bring the vessel close to the boat. She was indeed sailing nearly in the direct line of it; and then the fears, which they could not entirely repress, that she might pass without seeing them, vanished. They had been discovered from on board, and the course of the vessel shaped as to come up to them.

They were saved!

The good ship that thus rescued them from the jaws of death was the *Annie Colton*, Captain Wexley, and bound, like the *Dolphin*, on a whaling voyage to the North Pacific.

The captain listened to their story with patient pity, and ordered them to be supplied with every necessary and comfort at his command, and, having done this, turned his attention to his ship, for the storm from which Roland and Lily had been so providentially rescued was increasing every moment. It grew in fury as the day passed on, and deepened into a tornado ere the evening. The night became black as death—the wind howled—the ship sped madly on in the gloom—Captain Wexley walking his deck in sleepless anxiety; while Lily and Roland slept on in the deep slumber of exhaustion, unconscious of the terrible war of the elements.

The good ship *Annie Colton* bore herself bravely, however, and, with the loss of a few spars and a sail or two, breasted the tempest. And then fair breezes

and fair weather set in, and lasted for many days and weeks, as she sped on her course.

It was a little more than six weeks after the rescue when Roland, now grown bronzed and robust, was one morning addressed by Captain Wexley, with:

"Well, my boy, do you guess where we are now?"

"Yes, sir, in the Southern Indian Ocean, I think."

"Right. And to-morrow you'll see land, such as it is."

Roland's eyes sparkled. "What land, sir?"

"Tristan d'Acuña. I'll call there for fresh water and vegetables. It is in general rendezvous for that purpose for ships navigating these seas; and you and Lily can have a ramble on shore for a day or two."

The joy of the young pair was unbounded, for Roland soon communicated to Lily that they were near land. They went to their berths at night and dreamt of enchanted islands; and when the morning came they were awakened to find the *Annie Colton* at anchor. They speedily came on deck, and saw before them a large rocky island, with a towering cliff, a few scattered houses amidst a thin growth of trees and shrubs, and, lastly, they noted another ship lying at anchor on the opposite side of the bay.

After breakfast, Captain Wexley ordered out a boat, and after Roland and Lily were seated in it, he got in himself, and the party were pulled to shore. Here he left them to follow their own inclinations as to rambling about and exploring the island, while he went to make purchases and arrange for fresh supplies for his ship.

Lily and Roland wandered over the rocky island with greater pleasure than they had ever felt in straying about the delightful grounds of their distant Brixham home; and finally, after having ascended the highest accessible point, and enjoyed a view of the group of islands of which Tristan d'Acuña is the chief, and noted again the vessel lying at anchor in the bay, they turned to descend, and return to the beach where the boat of the *Annie Colton* was waiting.

At the second step of their downward progress they retreated with a cry of amazement and terror.

Before them, blocking the pathway, stood Captain Stocks!

If the terror of the youthful pair was great at thus encountering their enemy, Captain Stocks himself was fairly livid with rage and amazement. The murderous hatred with which he regarded them was increased a hundred-fold at seeing that his intended victims had escaped the death he had projected for them. But he resolved to accomplish their destruction, nevertheless, and that, too, without delay. So, with a few interrogatories as to how they had escaped, to which the youthful pair replied defiantly, the demon joy of his heart gleamed in his eyes when he realised that, after all, here, on the brink of a sheer precipice, was the very spot to accomplish his desires. To hurl them over, would be to hurl them to certain death!

Leaping upon Roland, he seized him in his arms, and, though the lad struggled stoutly, he was no match for Captain Stocks, who raised him up, and prepared to fling him over. The villain for this purpose had to make a few steps towards the edge of the precipice, when Lily, with a piercing cry, rushed to Captain Stocks, and caught hold of both his legs, and clung to them with a grip as close as death, her wild outcry ringing out into the still air.

The cry was heard by one who had been their only friend on board the *Dolphin*, a seaman named Bickley, who had intended to escape from the ship with them, and had come ashore with Captain Stocks; and now he sprang upon Captain Stocks without a moment's hesitation, for his murderous intention was too apparent to require any enlightenment as to the cause of the cry that had brought Bickley to the spot. A well-planted blow from the sailor's hand dropped Captain Stocks to the ground senseless; and Roland quickly liberated himself from his grasp.

"You came just in time, Bickley," he said, almost breathless. "Let us get away from here without delay; and we'll tell you all about our escape as we go down."

They left the senseless ruffian lying where he fell; and hastened to the *Annie Colton*'s boat, encountering Captain Wexley on their way. To them they told what had happened. The good skipper was horrified at what he heard; and when Bickley begged to be taken on board with Roland and Lily, he readily assented.

The boat pushed off, and in a short time our youthful pair and their friends, Captain Wexley and Bickley, stood on the deck of the *Annie Colton*. The fresh supplies required had in the meantime been all got on board by the exertions of the officers of the ship, which was indeed only waiting for the return of Captain Wexley to set sail.

When Captain Stocks recovered consciousness, he saw the *Annie Colton* under full canvas, sailing out of the bay, and he knew instinctively that Lily and Roland had once more escaped him!

With a muttered exclamation, he exclaimed:

"If I'm not mighty mistaken, I'll fall in with that ship and those youngsters again. And they won't escape me next time!"

The good ship *Annie Colton* rounded the Cape of Good Hope in fine weather, and with fair breezes and pleasant skies, stretched away on her course. The days and weeks went by monotonously enough; ships of different nationalities were now and then met; still Captain Wexley found no fit opportunity of sending his youthful passengers home; he took a fatherly interest in them, and shrank from entrusting beautiful little Lily, who, he said, resembled his own daughter, to the care of rough and, in many instances, lawless sailors.

"They seem like my own children to me, now. Mr. Raudall," he would say to the first mate. "I should never get over it if any harm came to them through my carelessness. The right chance for their return will come one of these days."

The time was indefinite enough, and seemed a long way off, as ship after ship was passed and time fled; but Lily and Roland neither lost hope nor courage. They seized every opportunity of sending letters home by passing vessels, and never tired of the wonders of the deep. The restless and mighty waves, the strange forms of the denizens of the ocean, afforded them endless attraction. The sky, too, presented glories unknown in their northern firmament. The low-hanging Southern Cross, and the brilliant constellations seen through the strangely clear atmosphere, had charms of which they never wearied.

And so the weeks grew into months, and the *Annie Colton* sailing on her way, had put many thousand leagues between her and the far-off port whence she had departed.

At length—it was early in February, and over four months from her visit to Tristan d'Acuña—she made land once more, and put into the Bay of Islands, at the northern extremity of New Zealand.

Here ensued a fine season of sperm-whale fishing, extending over many weeks. The whales being in great number, several barrels of oil were obtained, putting the captain and crew in good spirits.

Other whale-ships making their appearance, and the whales becoming shy, Captain Wexley resolved to change his fishing-ground and sail to the northward, calling at the Sandwich Islands for water and fresh stores, especially as the crew began to be affected with scurvy; for although he had laid in a good supply of these essentials, the stores would need renewing by the time the ship could reach Honolulu.

The *Annie Colton* hitherto had had prosperous breezes and a favouring sky. Shortly, however, after she sailed from the Bay of Islands the wind grew fitful, blowing in gusts; and though for several days the weather continued pleasant and the skies bright, the treacherous wind now and again blew up a light squall, as if to show that, notwithstanding its long season of good behaviour, it had not been tamed into entire subjection. But these changes of the weather gave no uneasiness to our young voyagers.

Late one afternoon, about six weeks after their departure from New Zealand, Captain Wexley stood on deck, looking anxiously at the brazen sky. All day the *Annie Colton* had lain like a log upon the waters, her sails lying flat against the masts, the wind having died completely out. The sea was like a broad and motionless expanse of glass, and reflected the merciless heat poured down by the sun from a sky without a single speck of cloud.

The seams of the vessel had opened under the intense heat. There was a smell of the molten tar in the dead atmosphere; and the sailors lounged listlessly about the deck, gasping almost for breath. The first mate paced to and fro uneasily, and now and then spoke to the captain, who leaned against the taffrail, dividing his glances between the sea and sky.

Beneath an awning rigged near where the captain stood, Lily reclined upon a seaweed mattress, Roland standing beside her. She had changed but little in all these months of sea-voyaging; but Roland's figure had developed into robustness and manliness, his face being bronzed by wind and sun, only upon his forehead remaining any sign of the original fairness of his complexion. By his own desire he had taken part in the sperm-whale fishery, from the dangerous task of harpooning to the operation of "trying out" the oil, and had acquitted himself well. Captain Wexley had taken note of him, and began to feel that Roland was fully competent to take charge of Lily, even for so lengthened a voyage as the return home.

"Oh, dear! how hot it is!" cried Lily. "I can scarcely breathe. Oh, Roland! if the wind would only blow again!"

"Poor Lily!" said Roland, "I agree with you. The heat is terribly oppressive. There must be a change

soon. I think Captain Wexley expects a breeze; he seems looking for its coming, I fancy."

"Captain Wexley looks very serious, Roland. He seems troubled," said Lily.

Both glanced at the captain as he stood conversing with the mate, and each was startled at the anxiety displayed in the faces of Captain Wexley and his first officer.

"I will go and ask if they think there's any prospect of a change," said Roland. And accordingly he stepped up to the captain, the mate moving away, and put the question respectfully.

"There'll be a breeze by-and-by, lad; after a calm, a storm, you know. But I don't like storms in these latitudes. These seas are full of shoals, low-lying islands, and reefs; and a ship driving before a gale is as likely as not to be forced on to one of them without a moment's warning. We'll have a breeze, lad, but it may not injure us at all—perhaps send us faster on our way to Honolulu."

"Honolulu is a place where many ships call at, is it not, sir?" asked Roland.

"Yes, lad; ships of all nations call there."

"Well, sir," said Roland, hesitatingly, "there might be a vessel there that would take Lily and I home. We have been happy with you, sir, and we are deeply grateful to you for your kindness to us, and shall be grieved to leave you; but Lily pines for her home, and I could protect and take charge of her; don't you think I could, sir?"

"I know you can, lad," said Captain Wexley, who was loth even to think of parting with his young friends. "You're not the lad you were when you came on board my ship. You're as good a sailor now as any man on board, as keen as a steel-trap, as quick as a tiger, besides knowing as much as a judge. I don't like to part with either of you, lad; but it's natural in you both to wish to get home again. I've been thinking of it, and will put you on board the first fitting homeward-bound craft, or leave you with the consul at Honolulu."

"I thank you from my heart, Captain Wexley!" replied Roland, with energy; "and so will Lily, and her parents will gladly reward you for all your generosity and kindness to us."

"Thank you, lad, thank you," said Captain Wexley; "but what I did was not done for reward, lad."

Roland was about to reply, but even while speaking the last few words, Captain Wexley had been conscious of a slight tremulous motion of the vessel, and had observed a faint ripple on the waters. He now motioned Roland to desist.

In a instant Captain Wexley was the active, alert seaman. He swept his practised gaze in the direction whence the breeze had come; and on the horizon perceived a low line of black and jagged clouds moving up to the zenith. They had gathered so swiftly and suddenly that the captain was startled at the sight of them.

The next moment his eyes fell upon waves leaping and tumbling madly, and rearing their white crests menacingly as they approached the vessel.

"The wind is coming, Mr. Randall!" he shouted. "Strip her to bare poles! Look alive, men!—quick, for your lives, before the gale is on us! Oh, here it comes!" said Captain Wexley, as the vessel shivered like a conscious creature before the first assault of the wind.

"Better take Lily down before the gale bursts," added the captain, turning to Roland.

Lily approached at hearing her name mentioned.

"Don't be troubled about me, captain," she said, in calm, sweet tones. "I've heard what you have been saying, and if I'm likely to be in the way, I'll go below; but if not, I want to stay on deck. I'm not at all afraid, captain," she added, casting a bright, fearless glance from him to the rising waves.

"Bless the little creature!" ejaculated the captain, with genuine admiration. "She's got the spirit of a true sailor. But take care of her, lad. I've my duties to attend to." And Captain Wexley moved towards the chief mate, who was directing and urging on the men in their necessary operations for the preservation of the ship in the gale that was breaking upon her.

Lily and Roland sat together, watching the darkening sky and the huge black clouds, and listening to the wind rattling among the shrouds and the running-gear, and occasionally deepening into a roar that startled them into clinging closer to each other. Suddenly the wind seemed to die away completely. It had not died out, however; it was simply gathering force for a fresh outburst.

Again, suddenly—as suddenly as a thunderbolt crashes in the sky—the storm burst in full fury upon the devoted ship.

It came with a crash and a roar wild and furious as the voice of a thousand demons, tossing the vessel as if it had been an eggshell. The air seemed to grow in an instant black and thick, the waves leaped

up fiercely, like wild beasts ravening for their prey, and all was confusion and terror.

Roland and Lily clung still closer to each other, in silent fear and voiceless prayer.

Beneath one furious breath of the storm, the vessel gave a wild plunge; the next instant she was driven over on her beam-ends, and a gigantic wave—a mountain of water, rather—swept over her decks. The mass of water retreated as rapidly as it had come; but when it did so, it carried everything before it.

In a moment the brave ship righted; and then, to the horror of Captain Wexley and his crew, who had scarcely been able to preserve themselves by clinging to the masts and rigging, it was seen by all that Lily and Roland had disappeared!

They had been swept off into the yawning gulf of waters by that avalanche of remorseless waves!

Buffeted and tossed about by the cruel surges, drenched to the skin, with a noise as of a thousand torrents bewildering their frightened senses, with a darkness pressing tangibly upon them, with a terrible sensation of sinking—sinking—these were the experiences of Lily and Roland during the few moments succeeding their being swept from the ship's deck.

And then a merciful unconsciousness came to Lily, and she lay lifeless and senseless, a helpless burden in Roland's arms.

The lad clung to her with the tenacity of despair. He was tossed like a plaything from wave to wave, the wind mocking his agony, and the sky frowning blackly upon him. He shrieked for aid, but the ship was already lost to view in the heavy darkness. He lifted his eyes in hopeless anguish, and murmured a wild prayer for Lily and himself, and their loved ones; and then his senses reeled, and he too became unconscious.

When he recovered his senses, it was with a strange sensation of having been knocked or pounded. He had scarcely had time to comprehend the sensation, when he was for the second time hurled heavily upon a hard, sandy beach by a great wave, which receded, bearing him on its crest. A wild hope began to spring into life in his bosom. Lily still lay on his breast, completely unconscious, but her little form was warm, proving that life had not deserted her. He was near a shore—a hostile one, perhaps—but, if he could only cling to it beyond the reach of the waves, they might both be saved.

He was carried out again, whirled into a black abyss, and then the returning wave, a giant billow, seized him and his burden, bore them onward with a resistless rush, and dashed them high upon the sandy beach! It then receded, leaving them there.

With the feebleness of an infant, Roland climbed still farther along the beach, to be out of the reach of future waves, laid Lily beside him on the warm sand, and looked around him.

How dark the night was.

The only light illuminating the gloom was the gleam of the warring waves, and an occasional flash of lightning. No lights on land or sea proclaimed human proximity.

"Lily, Lily!" he cried, chafing the hands of the little maiden in wild anguish. "Lily, waken! We are on land again. We are saved!"

Lily had already breathed quite audibly, showing that she was returning to consciousness, and the frenzied accents of Roland assisted her perfect recovery. She stirred feebly, and then cried out:

"Roland, are you here? oh, Roland, dear Roland—"

"I am here, darling!" interrupted the lad, gathering her close to his breast. "Don't you feel my arms around you, Lily?"

"How dark it is!" said Lily, in a frightened voice. "How the ship rocks! Oh, Roland, I dreamed we were drowned!"

"We have narrowly missed drowning," responded the lad. "Do you hear the waves roar with fury at having missed us? We were swept off the deck of the ship, Lily, and we are now on land. Don't you feel the sand under us?"

Lily reached out her hand and felt the heated sand, uttering a cry of astonishment.

"What island is it?" she asked.

"I don't know. The captain had no idea that we were so near an island."

"Why didn't the ship stop for us?" inquired Lily, unable to comprehend their novel situation.

"She could not. She was driven on before the gale like a cork."

"Well, she'll come back for us in the morning; so don't worry, Roland!"

"We must not deceive ourselves, Lily," replied the lad. "The captain would not know where to look for us. By morning he'll be a long way from here. He might search for weeks without finding a trace of us. Besides, he will feel sure we are drowned. It's a miracle we were not. But we will

hope that vessels sometimes stop at this island, and that we shall soon have a chance to get away."

"I am very tired, Roland," said Lily, "and it's so dark. Let's leave it all to God, and wait for the morning. I could go to sleep."

"And I, too," said Roland. "We'll do as you say, dear Lily—leave it all to God. After rescuing us so far, I am sure He will not desert us."

The youthful pair knelt on the sands in the darkness, the waves almost lapping their feet, and prayed trustfully for protection and aid from on high. Then, folded in each other's arms, they lay down and went to sleep.

The winds lashed the waves to fury; the mad billows, white with rage, leaped in frenzy on the hard shore, scattering showers of spray over their escaped victims, and the storm raged and the darkness grew denser, if possible—yet Lily and Roland slept on, guarded by Him in whom they trusted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BEFORE morning the wind had lessened, the waves had greatly subsided, and the fury of the storm had been spent.

Roland awakened late, to find the sun rising in splendour, the air balmy with warmth and fragrance, and the sea murmuring gently and sorrowfully on the beach.

He started up, uttered a cry at the strange scene he was met at his gaze—a cry that awakened Lily.

"Come, darling," he said, with kindling face and dilated eyes. "What a wonderful island! Look!"

He lifted her to her feet, and they surveyed the scene together.

They were upon an atoll, one of those strange islands of the Pacific, perfectly circular in form, and adorned with a luxuriance of tropical vegetation. It was circular in shape, and about eight miles in circumference. Within it lay a placid lagoon, protected from the winds that convulsed the sea. In this lagoon was another island of irregular form, a wilderness of palm trees, under whose shade picturesque huts were plainly visible. Canoes of various sizes rocked on the beach of the inner island, and human beings—evidently savages—were lounging about, playing with spears, or idly gazing at the encircling atoll.

The atoll itself was uninhabited.

Palm-trees shaded it, bread-fruit trees abounded on both islands, as did bananas and cocoanuts. Tahiti chestnuts and papaw-apples were plentiful; red and white shadocks, and golden oranges peeped out from nests of glossy green foliage; wild sugar cane, cotton; rice, and mulberries grew thickly; as did hosts of other fruits and vegetables, delicious to the taste or pleasant to the eye.

It was a scene like fairy-land.

"It seems like an enchanted island!" murmured Lily, her wondering eyes looking from the ring-island to the island that lay like a glowing emerald in its centre. "The people must be good and gentle, Roland, to be in keeping with their home. See their little thatched cottages! Perhaps this is a missionary island."

"I hope it is," replied Roland, "for we cannot long conceal our presence here from the natives. You look faint and tired, darling. I will find something for our breakfast, and we will then sit in the sun, where our clothes will dry perfectly."

He looked from one tree to another, scarcely knowing what fruit to choose. The bread-fruit he recognised by descriptions he had read of it, but he considered baking necessary to its perfection. He plucked an armful of great, sweet oranges, and filled Lily's lap with them; then he gathered luscious papaw-apples, bananas, shadocks, and Tahiti chestnuts, and the two sat down to their breakfast.

"What an exquisite flavour these fruits have!" exclaimed Lily. "They taste of sunshine and sweet air, it seems to me. I wish we could take lots of them home to mamma, Roland. Just try that custard-like fruit. It fairly melts in one's mouth. I've read all about these strange islands, and their tropical fruits, Roland; but, somehow, they never seemed real to me. It was more like speculation than actual description. Look at the flowers everywhere, the great thick vines climbing the trees, the hanging mosses, and the splendid birds. We never thought of an island like this at home."

Roland shared Lily's enthusiasm. The flowers, the fruits, and the birds had all equal charms for him. He ate as heartily as she, enjoying their delicious flavour, and sharing Lily's fancies.

"I feel thirsty," said Lily, "even after eating those juicy oranges. Isn't that a spring over yonder, Roland?"

She pointed to a green, shaded spot, from which issued a tiny, sparkling stream.

Roland arose to investigate its source, and uttered a joyful exclamation as he beheld, in a natural basin of marble-like stone, a clear and bubbling spring of the purest, sweetest, and softest water.

He tested its quality by tasting it, and then plucked from the brink of the spring a cala-leaf, twisting it into a cup-shape, and filling it with water. He then offered the impromptu cup to Lily, who drank from it laughingly.

By this time the young adventurers were in good spirits.

The sun had warmed them and dried their garments. Their breakfast had refreshed them. There were human habitations and human beings near, and they confidently anticipated being soon picked up by some passing vessel.

They had yet to learn that there are human beings who are more to be dreaded than the deadliest beasts of prey.

They had read of lovely islands in the Pacific, upon which nature has showered its choicest advantages, but where man feasts upon his brother man, and is below even the brutes in moral instinct or respect for his kind; but the tale had had for them the vividness and unreality of a dream.

Yet upon such an island they had been wrecked! Unconscious of the danger that every moment brought nearer, their hopes and courage rose. They drank again from the nectar-like spring, they cast aside the fruit already gathered and plucked and ate from the trees, wandering from one to another, as been wander from flower to flower.

"This is an atoll," said Roland, brushing up his school acquirements. "It is a ring, you see—an island shaped like a ring. I see an opening down yonder in the atoll large enough to permit a vessel to pass into the lagoon. Just think how favoured we are, Lily, in not having been cast on a desert island!"

"Yes, indeed," said Lily. "Roland, I should like to watch the natives. Let's cross this ring and go down on the opposite beach, so that we can get a good view of the people."

Roland assented, and led the way.

The palms were tall and stately, and their slender, column-like trunks were frequently encircled by clinging parasites. Heavy, weeping moss swayed in long branches from the trees, swinging at the breath of the breeze. Flowers, of vivid hues and odours sweet to heaviness, actually carpeted the ground. Fruits, of which the young couple had never even heard, abounded on trees and bushes, or clustered low near the earth. Nature had been prodigal in her gifts to this fair island, and it seemed, as Lily had said, as if its occupants must be worthy of it.

They soon, through deliciously-shaded but regularly-beaten paths, crossed the belt of the outer island, coming out upon a lovely beach of white pebbles, kissed by the placid ripples of the lagoon.

From this point they could readily look across to the island.

There was a pretty, picturesque village, with cottages looking like rustic arbours, thatched from the apex of the roof to the ground with wild sugar-cane. Some of these cottages were completely enveloped in flowering vines, with the exception of the low doorways. Before these latter women were standing, and children were playing.

The costumes of the people struck our hero and heroine as singular, the men wearing a short garment about the thighs, made of some gay cotton material, and the women being attired in a tunic of prepared bark, heavily fringed, and embroidered with birds' feathers and quills. Both sexes were painted and tattooed, and adorned with heavy, round ear-rings.

All this, in the clear atmosphere, with the sunlight falling on the inner island, and at their brief distance, was seen by our young adventurers.

They were about to turn their gaze from the near village to the surrounding woods, when a loud shout from the savages on the beach attested that their presence was discovered.

Their first impulse was to retreat into the deep shadow of the trees, but they decided to show themselves without any appearance of fear or distrust, hoping that the island would prove to be Christianised.

They therefore, hand in hand, boldly presented themselves on the beach.

In a moment all was excitement and confusion on the inner island. The natives, men, women and children, thronged to the beach, shouting and talking confusedly, brandishing clubs and spears, and uttering cries well calculated to intimidate older and stronger men than our boyish hero.

One or two of the canoes were quickly loaded, oars flashed in the sunlight, and a score of natives were hurrying to the shipwrecked pair.

"Be brave, Lily," said Roland, his own heart sinking with sudden and awful apprehension. "We are together, darling, and heaven will take care of us."

Lily astonished him by her calmness.

She pressed his hand, looked up at him lovingly, and waited quietly the coming of the savages.

The canoes shot over the water like arrows, and grated on the beach near the young couple. With terrific cries the savages rushed upon Lily and Roland, secured them, carried them to one of the boats, the crew of which immediately rowed with their captives towards the interior island. The crew of the other boat proceeded to search the atoll for more strangers, making the air hideous with their threatening cries.

Clinging to each other, frightened by the hideous countenances and flaming eyes of their savage captors, Lily and Roland neared the inner island shore, where the entire population awaited them.

(To be continued.)

THE HAMPTON MYSTERY.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

I see thou art implacable, more deaf
To prayers than winds and seas; yet winds and seas
Are reconciled at length, and sea to shore:
Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,
Eternal tempest never to be calm. *Milton.*

UNCONSCIOUS of the deadly enemies creeping up stealthily behind them in the mist and the darkness in that lonely, deserted street, Giralda and little Fay hurried onwards towards the doctor's residence, conversing in low tones as they went.

As they gained the nearest street corner—that by which Adlowe's hired horses were in waiting—a gust of wind seized their umbrella, threatening to turn it inside out.

"Wait a moment, Fay," said Giralda, pausing to right the umbrella and to gather her waterproof cloak closer. "The night is worse than I thought. I do not like to expose you to the wind and rain. We will go back, darling."

"Oh, no, no," urged Fay, pleadingly. "You want to know how the sick man is. The doctor has been to see him again to-day. Let us go on."

Giralda allowed herself to be persuaded, her own anxieties urging her strongly in the same direction.

The refractory umbrella was reduced to a condition of usefulness, and the young pair were about to resume their walk, when Adlowe gave a signal, and in an instant the two men had sprung upon their prey.

There was a woman's gasping cry, a child's low, frightened moan, and Giralda and Fay, helpless and terrified, were clutched close in the hands of their captors.

"Not a word—not a cry, Giralda!" whispered Lord Adlowe, fiercely. "You know who I am. At the first sound you make to summon assistance, I will choke your brother as remorselessly as I would crush a worm!"

Giralda repressed the scream that trembled on her lips. Her brain was in a whirl. She could not think. She knew only that her enemy had found her out, and that she was again in his power.

More thoughtful of another than of herself even now, she stretched out her arms to encircle her brother, as if determined to defend him with her life.

"Put the boy into the waggon, Rigby," commanded Adlowe, keeping a close hold upon Giralda and a keen watch up and down the street.

Little Fay, more dead than alive, was deposited in the waggon.

"Bind him!" said Adlowe, briefly.

Rigby hastened to tie the little fellow's ankles together, and then secured his wrists in like manner.

"Oh, do not take him without me!" cried Giralda, Fay's low, quivering moans rending her heart.

"I don't intend to," declared Lord Adlowe, his voice thrilling with his savage exultation. "You shall go with him. You shall be, in a measure, his guardian, for upon your conduct shall depend his life. I am a desperate man, Giralda, and I am in a mood for desperate deeds. Let me help you into the waggon."

Giralda hesitated, flashing a wild glance through the darkness and the thin, slow-falling rain. No one was in the street at that moment. The shops were closed, and their proprietors had retired to their back parlours. There was no one to hear her if she should call.

Half-stunned and half-fainting, she submitted to be helped into the waggon.

"Shall I bind the young lady, my lord?" asked Rigby.

"No, it is not necessary," replied Lord Adlowe. "You have only to place the boy within my reach. If she chooses to escape, she will only seal his doom."

Giralda sank down on the cushioned seat.

"Go at once to the bluff cottage and bring Mrs. Bittly, Rigby," said his lordship, in an undertone.

"You had better be on your way to the station. I can manage my passengers alone."

He mounted to his seat, took the reins, and drove

slowly down the street, Rigby hurrying on foot in the direction of the station.

For a time Giralda did not speak, seeming wholly benumbed. She sought out poor little Fay's bound wrists and clasped his hands in her own, but his low frightened sobs and moans were almost more than she could bear. She laid her face against his little teary-wet cheek, and drew him close to her, but she could not soothe him with words.

Lord Adlowe hurried out of the town by the shortest route, having informed himself in advance in regard to his course. His evil soul thrilled with exultation at his success in his night's work, and he began to indulge a hope that he should yet retrieve his sinking fortunes and attain to the wealth he so much coveted.

The rough town pavements were soon left behind, and the wheels rolled almost noiselessly over the country road upon which they had entered. The mist continued to fall slowly, and through it, as through a haze, Giralda saw houses and trees loom up on either side, and now and then a light flashed out from some parlour window, and the sound of music and laughter strayed to her ears, seeming to mock her with a happiness which she feared she was never to know again.

After a while, rousing herself from her despair, she broke the silence.

"Lord Adlowe," she said, in a low voice, "where are you taking us?"

Lord Adlowe started as from a reverie, and answered, promptly:

"To a house which I have hired under an assumed name near Pencoed."

"For what purpose?"

"You know as well as I do, Giralda—to compel you to become my wife. This house at Pencoed is merely intended as a temporary retreat. I mean to keep you there until the search for you is over, and your spirit is broken sufficiently to make you submit to my will. In the hour in which you promise to marry me, I shall give you your freedom. Till then you will be my prisoner."

He spoke with a determination that made Giralda shudder.

"You have nicely outwitted me so far," he continued, with bitter emphasis, "but you will find now that a young girl like you is no match for a desperate man like me. You have not comprehended what you were fighting."

"You spoke of a search for me," said the young girl. "Who is searching for me?"

"Lord Trevalyan. You may imagine why he is searching for you, since he hates and loathes you now, believing in your baseness and treachery," answered Lord Adlowe, delighting in the falsehood he was uttering. "I believe his lordship has some idea of prosecuting you for trying to obtain money of him under false pretences."

"I never obtained money of him under false pretences," exclaimed Giralda, indignantly.

"You didn't go to his house under an assumed name and an assumed identity, and allow him to make a will leaving you a fortune, oh?" asked Adlowe, mercilessly. "That is the way he states the case."

A low, quivering sigh came from Giralda. The hot, salt tears sprang to her burning eyes.

"I loved him," she murmured under her breath, bending low over her little brother. "I truly and sincerely loved him."

"Then," said Adlowe, coolly, "Grosvenor has turned against you. He can't stand all the disgrace and scandal that would ensue from his alliance with a daughter of Geoffrey Trevalyan. The marquis infected him with his own sentiments, and he has gone to town determined to spend a gay season and to contract a more suitable marriage—"

"You speak falsely, Adlowe!" interrupted Giralda, in a sudden glow of indignation greater than that she had displayed before. "I know Grosvenor too well to believe what you may say of him."

"Oh, very well. I hardly expected you to believe it. Cherish your little delusions, Giralda, while you can."

He spoke carelessly, as if her faith or want of faith in Lord Grosvenor mattered little to him. His manner went far to convince Giralda of his truthfulness. Her experience of the world of late had not been such as to continue her childlike trust in human nature, and for a moment she acknowledged to herself, with a dull pang at her heart, that it was very possible that Lord Grosvenor might have been persuaded to relinquish all pretensions to the hand of Geoffrey Trevalyan's daughter.

But only for a moment did she consider such a possibility. Then her faith and trust in Paul Grosvenor overrode all possibilities and objections, and stood as firm and unassailably as a rock.

"Say nothing more to me of Lord Grosvenor," she said, sternly, her blue eyes flashing. "I do not believe a word you say. I am not even sure but that Lord Trevalyan would forgive me my crime of being the daughter of his nephew, and would cease my father's persecution for my sake."

Adlowe winced, but made no reply.

There followed a silence, during which his lordship drove more swiftly, venting his secret annoyance upon the horses.

Giralda bent lower over Fay.

His head was in her lap, closely sheltered with his cloak. He was awake, and softly crying, his young soul convulsed with a vague terror of what was to befall his sister and himself.

"My darling! my darling!" whispered Giralda, gathering him closer to her bosom, and softly kissing him, "do not grieve so! God will take care of us, dear Fay! Can't you trust Him?"

The boy clung to her without replying.

Giralda stole her hand under the robe, and gently began to pull at the bonds that confined his wrists.

A wild hope sprang up in her soul. If she could free Fay, and escape with him from the rear seat of the waggon, and crouch somewhere in the darkness, and so elude her enemy!

The idea was less wild than it might seem.

The waggon was of a style very common, having a driver's seat, on which Adlowe sat, and in the rear of this two other seats running lengthwise, and shut in by a little door.

It was upon one of these rear seats the captives sat, Fay being within reach of Adlowe's hand.

Fay swiftly comprehended Giralda's intent, and hoisted his sobs.

Adlowe looked quietly over his shoulder.

Giralda worked silently, picking at the knot, but Fay had done his work well. The heavy rope resisted all her efforts.

Fay motioned her to put her ear to his lips.

She did so, and he whispered:

"I've a knife in my pocket. Cut the cord!"

Giralda's hand stole towards his pocket in quest of the knife.

And at the moment Adlowe reached over, startling them both beyond measure.

"I see what you about!" he said, coolly. "Trying to escape? No, no, Giralda; you won't outwit me again!"

He stooped the horses, and, regardless of the pleading of his captives, lifted the lad and put him on the front seat beside himself, wrapping him carefully from the rain.

"And now, Giralda," he continued, starting the horses again, "you may escape when you please. But if you do escape, you will be sealing your brother's fate!"

His tone made the girl shudder.

"Lord Adlowe," she cried, with passionate earnestness, "is there no pity in your heart? Fay and I have never harmed you. I beg you to let us go."

"Never harmed me!" repeated Adlowe, mockingly. "Why, it is you two and your brother who have come between me and the finest property in England!"

"We will pay you a ransom to let us go," pleaded Giralda. "I will promise you any sum you may ask for our freedom. My mother will pay it—"

"The ransom I ask is yourself!" rejoined Adlowe, interrupting her. "I loved your mother, the Lady Beatrice, and spent the best years of my life in useless devotion to her. That love has turned to hatred. It would wring her heart for her only daughter to become my wife, and to be compelled to cover her out of the fortune I expected to receive with her ladyship. Geoffrey hates me, and it would be a fine revenge on him to make his daughter my wife. In short, Giralda, everything inspires me to this course, and not the least inspiration is yourself. Your beauty, your freshness, your innocence have charmed a heart that was world-weary. I am not sure but that I even prefer you to the queenly, haughty Lady Beatrice!"

"Do not insult me with your professions of love," said Giralda, creeping nearer, that she might comfort Fay. "I would rather have your hate than your love!"

"There may not be so much difference between the two!" said Adlowe. "My love and my hatred are equally fierce, and not to be balked. Have you thought, or are you too ignorant of the world's usages to consider the question, that this night excursion with me will compromise your reputation, and cause Lord Grosvenor, despite his faith in you, to decline a marriage with you? I merely wish to show you that, even were you free, he would never marry you!"

Giralda was silent.

"I am not so bad a man as you think me," continued his lordship, after a pause. "I have been driven to desperation by finding myself likely to become a beggar, after years of expectancy and waiting to become my uncle's heir. But I have qualities which only need cultivation to make me a noble man. Giralda, I love you! I worship you as a superior being! I should be as clay in your hands. You could mould me to your will. It is no light thing to possess the power you do. You can make me good and honourable. You can drive me to

wickedness and baseness. I throw the responsibility upon you."

"And I reject it!" cried Giralda. "You cannot put upon another the responsibility Heaven placed upon you. If you have any desire to become good, show it by setting us free!"

"I cannot do that. I love you too much. Have pity, Giralda, upon an erring soul that needs a guide, and become my guide to truth and goodness."

His hypocritical pretences disgusted the young girl.

"It's a pity money is so hard to be got, Lord Adlowe," she said. "For it must fatigue you to pretend to a repentance you do not feel. If you were in earnest in your pretended desire to reform, a clergyman would be your best guide and counselor. If you have any sense remaining," she added, "you must see that it would be impossible for me to marry the enemy of my parents, the man but for whom my life and that of those dear to me would have been bright and cloudless. It is you, Lord Adlowe—you who stabbed my uncle Trevallyan so many years ago, and managed so that the crime and the odium were laid to my poor father! Marry you! I should feel as if I were marrying my father's murderer, for you were the assassin of his reputation, which he held dearest than life! Marry you! Never!"

Her indignant scorn held Adlowe silent. He could not answer her, and became, sullen, thoughtful, and plotting.

The night wore on. Little Fay dropped asleep, his head falling upon the knee of his enemy. Giralda sat wakeful in the waggon, her pale face upturned to the mist, her eyes straining in vain to pierce the dull gray of the clouded sky. What were her thoughts and prayers in that time of darkness? Her stern silence did not betray.

Towards morning the mist cleared, but the chilly air grew keener and colder. Giralda shivered, in spite of her wrappings.

"We are almost there," said Adlowe about day-break, breaking the long silence. "You will soon be at your new home, which you will leave, as I said, only when you promise to become my wife!"

CHAPTER XLIX.

What stratagems, how fell, how butchery,
Erroneous, mutinous, and unnatural,
This deadly quarrel daily doth beget!

Henry VI.

THE sun was just becoming visible above the horizon when Lord Adlowe came within sight of the house he had hired, and in which he proposed to immure his captives.

He knew it at once, from the pencil sketch of it which the agent had shown him, and from the particulars he had received concerning its location and surroundings.

It stood alone, no other house being in sight, upon a knoll, with a stable and out-buildings in the rear. It had upon one side a small dense shrubbery, upon the other a large paddock, and there were a few irregularly shaped outlying fields.

The house itself was of red brick, nearly square in shape, its plainness relieved by several quaint windows, a turret or two, and a small bell-tower. It had a dreary, forsaken look, being closely shut up.

In front there was a lawn sodden with rain. At the two sides were last year's flower-gardens, with rose-bushes and shrubbery that would flower in due season. In the rear, between the dwelling and the stables, was a weed-covered kitchen garden.

Lord Adlowe looked at the place, his face expressing satisfaction. Its very loneliness and seclusion, its air of wild decay, impressed his favourably. He assured himself that he could not have found a better prison for his captives.

He turned his glances upon Fay, and uncovered the lad's face. The little fellow was very pale and sorrowful even in his slumbers, and there was a piteous expression about his mouth that would have agonised his mother could she have seen it.

Adlowe then glanced at Giralda, thinking from her silence that she too slept. She met his glance with a gaze so steady, so wakeful, so stern, that he comprehended that she had not slept at all, but had been sleepless and on her guard all the night.

He pointed to the red brick house.

"Yonder is your home, Giralda," he exclaimed, "until you promise to leave it with me for my own home as my bride. See how lonely the situation is. It is three miles to Pencoed. No one will ever trace you here."

There was a carriage-sweep, and the gate between it and the road was open. Lord Adlowe, having reached it, drove in and came to a halt before the front door.

He sprang out into the porch and lifted Fay from the waggon, not daring to leave him there a moment, lest Giralda should drive off. He held the boy in his arms while he unlocked the front door, and then laid him down and turned to assist Giralda to the porch.

The young girl spurned his assistance, and sprang lightly from the waggon, a stormy look in her violet eyes.

"Do not touch me!" she said, in a spirited tone. "I will follow you while Fay is in your custody!"

Adlowe smiled mockingly, and gathered Fay again in his arms, as the child aroused himself from his slumbers and called out in a bewildered way for his sister.

"I am here, darling," said Giralda, approaching, that he might see her. "I shall not leave you."

Fay smiled faintly as his gaze rested upon her pale and anxious face. Little, unselfish soul! He was trying to cheer her. From that moment he uttered no more moans and sobs, despite the miseries of his situation, but feigned a cheerfulness more sorrowful to behold than tears.

The hall, in which they had momentarily paused, was carpeted and neatly furnished. There were several rooms opening from it, and a staircase led from it to the upper door.

"Your rooms will be upstairs," said Adlowe, after a moment's deliberation. "Be kind enough to follow me, Giralda."

Still carrying Fay, Lord Adlowe mounted the stairs. Giralda followed. She was strongly tempted to return to the waggon, make her escape, and drive swiftly to Pencoed in quest of someone to rescue Fay, and only the conviction that Lord Adlowe would do the lad an injury, or escape with him, prevented her putting her wild idea into practice.

From the upper hall, as from the lower, there opened several doors, each having a key in its lock. Adlowe led the way to the front chamber over the drawing-room, remarking that, after seeing the plan of the house, he had chosen this room for his prisoner.

The room proved to be neatly furnished for a lady's occupancy. It possessed three windows, which were curtained with chintz and lace. There was a bright carpet on the floor, a couple of easy-chairs, a few pictures on the walls, a few books, and a neat tent bedstead, draped with chintz.

A door led from this room into an inner one, which was fitted up in a similar style, and which had evidently served as a child's bedroom.

"These are your rooms, Miss Giralda," said Adlowe, depositing Fay in an easy-chair. "You may, if you choose, release your brother now, while I go down and prepare your breakfast. I brought all the necessary provisions for several days' use from Dalton, as I do not care to have it known at present that Pencoed that this house has found a tenant. Pity that your dainties, which you were taking to the doctor's residence last night, were dropped on the pavement in your alarm. But I have no especial dainties to offer you, I am sure that Rigby has catered for a lady's appetite!"

He withdrew, locking the door behind him.

He had scarcely departed when Giralda flew to Fay's side, drew the knife from his pocket, and cut his bonds, releasing him.

There were purple rings about his wrists and ankles where the cord had been drawn tightly, and these Giralda chafed with her little hands, crying over the boy, and venting her indignation against Adlowe in half-coherent speech.

"The wretch!" she exclaimed, her violet eyes burning fiercely. "How dared he? And he thinks he can make me love and pity a man who can so cruelly maltreat an innocent boy! Oh, my darling! I kept my eyes upon you all night! You did not stir when I was not looking at you, my little brother! Not a sob or moan of yours but pierced my heart!"

She gathered him to her bosom. She rained kisses on his face, and on his poor little wounded wrists, and petted him, and wept over him in a wild, anguished way, the boy trying to comfort her to the best of his small ability.

"Don't cry, Giralda," he pleaded. "Papa and Herbert will come for us. Or that splendid Grosvenor you told me about will find us! He saved you once from drowning, and once from that bluff cottage prison, and of course he'll trace you out and save you again when you need him so much! Oh, I wish he'd come now and take us to the Eagle's Eyrie!"

The boy's words brought hope to Giralda. She began to think that, after all, Paul might be looking for her, and that Providence might guide him to her.

"And if he don't come," continued Fay, "what is to hinder our getting out of the window to-night and running off?"

He asked the question eagerly. Before the young girl could answer, the key grated in the lock and Lord Adlowe made his appearance, bearing in his arms a hammer, nails, and boards.

"I have come to make my cage secure," he explained, fastening the door. "Egress by the window is now feasible just at present!"

He saw that he had frustrated some hope or plan of Giralda's, and he smiled mockingly as he proceeded to board up the windows securely to within a foot of the top.

"There! I defy anyone to withdraw those spikes, or to split the boards without an axe, and a man's arm to wield it!" he exclaimed, when he had finished. "You will find the light quite sufficient for reading, if you choose to employ your time in that fashion!"

He again withdrew, locking the door, and the two prisoners faced each other with very blank faces.

"We will trust in Providence, though our future does look very dark," said Giralda, assuming a cheerfulness, that Fay might not be utterly hopeless and despairing.

After a half-hour's delay, during which he regaled himself, Lord Adlowe brought up some bread, a pitcher of water, and a few other articles of refreshment, then again leaving his captives to themselves.

"Lord Adlowe has secured the windows, that we may not get out," said Giralda. "Now I will secure the door, that he may not get in."

She wheeled the bedstead from its corner against the door, and, having partaken of the breakfast with Fay and bathed his tear-stained face, she lay down on the bed beside him, and the two were soon asleep.

It was late in the afternoon when Giralda awoke. The light was dim in the room, and there was a pleasant sense of heat that was very grateful. She started up in affright, missing Fay from her side, and called him.

"Here I am, Giralda!" replied Fay's voice from the vicinity of the fireplace. "I am getting your supper."

Despite her anxieties, Giralda could not repress a smile as her gaze met the grave little poet face of Fay, and marked the lad's proceedings.

Lord Adlowe had left some pieces of board after darkening the windows, and Fay had succeeded in partially cutting these up with his knife. He had found some matches on the mantelpiece, and had not hesitated to extract a sufficient number of leaves from one of the books for kindling purposes. He had, in short, made a good fire, and was, when Giralda awoke, engaged in toasting, and smoking about equally, a piece of bread for her supper.

He looked up with a preoccupied air when Giralda addressed him, and resumed his task, while the young girl made her toilet and wheeled back the bedstead to its former position.

"They've been knocking at the door several times, and once they unlooked it and slammed it against the bedstead," observed Fay, turning his slice of bread over.

"They! Who besides Lord Adlowe, dear?"

"I don't know. It's a woman, I think. There they come again!"

He continued his task placidly as steps were heard in the hall, and the key was grated in the lock, and he did not even stir when the door opened and Lord Adlowe entered, after a preliminary knock.

"Ah, a fire!" said his lordship, frowning. "Well, it's as well, perhaps. You shall have a fire, Miss Giralda. Your attendant," he added, "is come."

"My attendant!" said Giralda, arching her brows.

"Yes; the woman who will take charge of you in my absence. I shall not stay here longer than night-fall, lest I bring discovery upon myself. I intend to make an apparent search for you, and throw off any suspicion that I may be concerned with your disappearance from Dalton, otherwise than having frightened you away by my presence there. I cannot conceal that. I am going back to Dalton with the horses myself."

"And Rigby?"

"Will stay here, to act as assistant guard. Should Lord Grosvenor, as is almost impossible, succeed in tracing you here, I shall have force enough here to resist him."

At this juncture a step was heard on the stairs, and soon after a woman made her appearance, bearing a tray well laden with food.

Giralda recognised her instantly as the mistress of the bluff cottage, Mrs. Bittly.

She came in, set down her tray, made a courtesy to Giralda, and stared at Fay with apparent surprise. That small individual, having recovered his equanimity under the combined soothing influences of sleep, food, and fire, returned her stare with interest.

Giralda gave the woman no greeting. The sight of that hard-featured face, with its expression of greed and shrewdness, made her sick at heart.

"Oh, very well, miss!" said Mrs. Bittly, tossing her head. "I don't pretend to be rich and grand, but one thing I do pretend to be—mistress of this 'ere house, which my lord sent for me and asked me to come. If folks is scornful they must have made up their minds to marry my lord, which I do say is the best and handsomest man in the United Kingdom."

Adlowe saw that Giralda turned away her head to conceal her aversion to this woman, and he secretly exulted, believing that Mrs. Bittly's coarseness and vulgarity were so many scourges to drive Giralda to accept him.

"I leave you and Bittly invested with authority to separate these two whenever you think it best," he said, maliciously. "Should the young lady signify at any time her willingness to marry me, Rigby will come for me at once. You are to keep her very close, Mrs. Bittly. She will make every attempt at escape, and on that account I think you had better spend much time with her in these rooms. Rigby and Bittly can be continually on the watch, both against her escape and against intrusion. Should Lord Grosvenor ever make his appearance in this vicinity, you know what to do, and how to meet him."

Mrs. Bittly signified assent.

Giralda had listened to these remarks with a pale face, and with a growing sense of trouble. She had not felt how powerless she was until now, when she knew that the Bittlys and Rigby were to be employed constantly to watch against her escape or rescue.

"Giralda," said her persistent and unwelcome suitor, approaching her, "you have driven me to this course by your coldness and refusal to marry me. Remember that you have but to speak the word to be restored to your friends. Remember that on you depends your little brother's happiness, your father's safety, your mother's peace. The fate of your entire family is in your hands!"

He turned and quitted the room, followed by Mrs. Bittly, who locked the door.

(To be continued.)

FACETIA.

"COMING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE."—In the *Times*, a few days since, it was reported that the Chancellor of the Exchequer "will not appear in the market as a borrower of the amount to be raised for compensation for the acquisition of the telegraphs, but will meet it, temporarily or otherwise, by *adjustment* in connection with various branches of the public accounts." Is this an introduction to some more of Mr. Lowe's financial hanky-panky? Ratepayers, beware!—*Judy*.

CAN IT BE?—During the recent fog, some benefactor of his species, name unknown, tumbled the battered old statue in Leicester Square off his horse, and laid him on his back in the mud. There is a mystery about this which is not yet fathomed. It is certain that the first words that fell from the two policemen who discovered the fallen effigy were, "This is a rum go!" and "This is Strange!" This, in itself, was an extraordinary allusion. Is it possible that the manager of the Alhambra, disgusted and driven to despair? It may be so!—*Judy*.

QUEER QUERIES, BY OUR BOTANICAL QUERIST.

Do specimens of the "Speedy Traveller" invariably start up where railway cuttings have been planted?

Are monkeys particularly fond of Ape-ricot?

Can we recognise young Belgians as Brussels sprouts, or Swiss girls as Alpine roses?

Does the Emperor of the French spend his best care and talents in the preservation of his "Crown Imperial," whilst for his officers he prefers "sword lilies?"

Have not lawyers and counsellors a particular taste for the forcing up, bringing forward, and proper disposal of "Doch weeds;" whilst of all plants, sewing-machinists prefer the Hem-lock?

Do flirts care particularly for "bachelors' buttons?"

We presume hardy evergreens should be careful of bedding out at this season.

Do pugilists prefer "box-wood" to any other plant?—*Will-o'-the-Wisp*.

TOO TRUE!

Mamma: "My dear child, where did you get that dreadful scratch on your arm?"

Little Ada: "Oh, 'ma, it was Lisbeth's big brass brooch with the green glass in it, that the tall soldier gave her."—*Punch*.

SEVERE.

Young Correggio: "I say, my ancient Murillo, that sky of yours wants smoothing down."

Murillo: "I know that, but I've lost my badger brush."

Young Correggio: "Why don't you use your beard, old fellah. There's enough there for half-a-dozen."—*Will-o'-the-Wisp*.

If we may trust rumour, the City is likely to be still further improved ere long. The Corporations are well pleased with their recent successes that they look with a favourable eye upon all sound and practicable schemes for beautifying the City. We have seen one now under consideration, which will, if carried out, make London east of Temple Bar a city of magnificent distances. The old narrow streets will be widened, open spaces secured wherever possible, and the civic buildings concentrated about the Guild-

hall. Of course such a scheme means money, but then the City is rich, and as it also means work for the many unemployed, we shall be glad to see it adopted—even if only in part. The Poultry in Cheap-side, and the block of Holywell Street in the Strand, are doomed. The sooner someone begins to clear them off the better. —*Fun*.

RAILING FOR AL SIRAT.

From the drawing-room to the dining-room, when you have dame or maiden on your arm, lies the British Al Sirat, The Bridge over Tophet. Speak, and speak well, as you make that passage, or ever thereafter hold your tongue. All is over with you, and society shall know you for a Muff.

To the end, therefore, that those who have not the gift of saying the right thing may be saved from falling into the pit, Mr. Punch offers them a few suggestions for little speeches on the path of peril. Don't, perhaps, speak too loud.

1. The—a—comfort of these small houses is that you know exactly what you are going to have for dinner, for you smell it.

2. Muddle in pairing us off. Jones always does that; he gets chattering to people instead of sorting them. It is by a happy blunder of his that I have the honour of escorting you; but I fear we shall be parted at the table.

3. Hope Jones means to give us some decent wine this time. I advise you to eschew what he is good enough to call hock.

4. Awkward thing dining by daylight when the chignon don't match the hair—no, not the next, the one before her, with the liberal shoulders.

5. Yes, of course, he ought to have taken down the bride; but Mrs. Jones doesn't like her, and he has no will of his own. I daresay that it will be noticed, somehow—people are all so good-natured.

6. Observe whether the crest on your forks is a dove or a leopard. If it's a dove, Mrs. Jones has made up her row with Mrs. Brown, who lends her things when more than a dozen forks are asked.

7. Do you know why the Joneses give this party? I'll tell you. Because Jones has got a book nearly ready—there are five newspaper fellows on the stairs now. I'm rather glad, for they will have a cigar, which Jones thinks is not the thing.

8. I wouldn't disturb your mind, but we shall be dreadfully crushed at table—there are at least four more than can be comfortably seated—Mrs. Jones always will have her fat cousins, though they can't walk.

9. I am only too delighted to have this honour, but of course you ought to have gone down with Sir Carnaby Jinks. That is one of Mrs. Jones's little bits of unconventionality, as she calls it. One might like it, if one didn't see through it. You'll know what I mean when we sit down.

10. Yes, we have waited three-quarters of an hour; but it does not much matter. They can't spoil the dinners in this house—for a reason.

11. If you are put near the door, listen occasionally, and you'll hear the parlour-maid quarrelling like fun with the greengrocers.

12. Mrs. Jones has the atrocious habit of letting her children come in after dinner. They can't help their ugliness, but if I were you, as you have some of your own, I wouldn't encourage them much, for I know Howlet there, the bald-headed doctor, has been attending them for scarlatina. I daresay they're quite well, but it is right to mention it.

13. Do you want to revenge the bet you lost to the Oxford and Harvard race? Six to one that Mrs. Jones mentions, loudish, the name of Lady Portmadoe before the fish is gone. I shall look at you when she does, if we don't sit together.

14. Do you dine with the Bosobels on Friday? I'm so glad. So do I. Things are always pleasant there, and they are the goodest people. I mention it now, because if we part it's for ever. I never come upstairs again here—they have amazing music.

Any one or more of these things, or things conceived in the same spirit, and said in that tender voice of impudent confidence-making which is much affected by sundries—will help you delightfully over Al Sirat.—*Punch Pocket-book*, 1870.

CHRONOLOGY.

'Bus-Driver: "They tell me there've been some coins found in these 'ere 'Exkyvations' that a been buried there a matter of four or five 'undred year!!!"

Passenger Friend: "Oh, that's nothin'! Why, there's some in the Brit'ish Museum—ah—more than two thousand year old!!!"

'Bus-Driver (after a pause): "Come, George, that won't do, yer know! 'cause we're only in eight's 'undred an' sixty-nine now!!!"—*Punch*.

ANOTHER ABYSSINIAN GRIEVANCE.—A witty judge, hearing a barrister pronounce a short Latin syllable long (some of 'em will), said, "We are busy just now, Mr. Jones; don't make things longer than necessary." One would not—But you are all to say Magdala, and not Magdala, do you know that? The

last straw—we bore the bill, but this new weight is really oppressive.—*Punch.*

ONE FOR THE NEW ZEALANDER.

It is reported—say the colonial papers—that the moa—the gigantic bird of New Zealand—has been recently seen alive by a party of Germans in the Ruahine Ranges. We have heard of German cozens before, and we should like ourselves to see moa before we believe.—*Fun.*

THE TEETH.

NATURE, in its civilised condition, is less perfect in the dental processes than perhaps in any other. The plain ground of this seemingly mild, but, it may be, unfair reproof of nature, seems to be the sad truth that a great evil of civilisation is that of an early rotting of the teeth. It has been said on all sides that tribes whom we call savage, and whose life has not been long touched by that of so-called highly civilised men, whatever blessings of life they lack while we enjoy them, have what many men of a higher form of life have not—sound teeth. The New Zealanders' teeth are regular, and remain good to a late period of life. Among the Feejeees, Mr. Pickering did not meet with an instance of a rotten tooth; and Barnet Burns had not known a Maori with unsound ones; nor do we learn that caries of the teeth was one of the evils of the life of the red men of America. In the voyage of Pirard de Laval to the Maldives, he found the people altogether free of toothache, owing, he thinks, to their continual chewing of betel, which strengthened their gums, though they were otherwise careful to wash and clean their teeth.

The betel, or areca, is chewed also by the people of India and of the Philippine Islands, though (witness Commodore Beaufort's voyage to the East Indies) the men of the Bay of Saint Augustine rubbed their teeth, which were white, even, and small, almost every minute with a small piece of wood. In the refinement and luxury of the old Romans—blessings of civilisation—the teeth began to moulder. The natives of Kingsmills or Tarawan cluster made a kind of molasses of copopalm, and were the only tribes of the Pacific Islands who had decayed teeth. A correspondent has enquired, "what is the date of the introduction of artificial teeth into England or Europe?" To this query there is authority showing that they were not uncommon in the reign of James I. (anno 1609) in England. But that this substitute for nature's decay was usual in the days of the Roman emperors is confirmed by a caustic epigram of Martial:

"Thais shows teeth that are black,
By Lecania white teeth are shown.
How so? Why Lecania's are bought,
And Thais discloses her own."

In Egypt, a dentist found a stuffed tooth in a mummy, and several teeth in other mummies which bore marks of filing. Some tribes, again, have an odd fancy to improve the shape of their teeth by chipping or some other kind of trimming. Mr. Edwards says: "We were struck at Braves by the appearance of some Portuguese boys whose teeth had been sharpened in the Indian manner." The men of a tribe in Africa chip their teeth to points, and some punch out in childhood one incisor of the lower jaw. The Africans of Batoka, in Africa, knock out their upper incisor teeth to be, as they say, like oxen rather than zebras. Some tribes, however, as we are told, choose to have black rather than white teeth.

The teeth of the Tonguine (like those of the Siamese) are as black as art can make them; the dying occupies three or four days, and is done to both boys and girls when they are about twelve or fourteen years old; during the whole operation they never take any nourishment, except of the liquid kind, for fear of being poisoned by pigment if they swallowed what required mastication. Every person, high and low, rich and poor, is obliged to undergo this severe operation, alleging it would be a disgrace to human nature to have teeth white as those of dogs or elephants. Prior mentions this custom, but transfers it to the Chinese.

The Americans, says a writer, allege the bolting practices of their countrymen and women as explanatory of their almost universally decayed teeth. They said that nature would not continue to them that of which they made no use.

The decay is doubtless occasioned by the large quantities of sugar and molasses, by the hot bread, by the iced water, alternating with hot tea, in which they all indulge.

EXTRAORDINARY CONDUCT OF A FOX.—A fox lately paid a visit to Mr. C. Ridger's hen-house at Swanthorpe Farm, which he entered by scratching a hole under the door, and succeeded, at various times, in despoiling it of 7 ducks and 10 fowls. On a subsequent night Mr. Ridger, again hearing his nocturnal

visitor, scared him away, but discovered 2 ducks and a hen lying dead close to the house. A duck was also found buried under some loose hay near a rick, and during the day 2 ducks returned much bitten about the necks and covered with dirt, which led to the supposition that they had been buried alive by Master Reynard. This supposition led to further search, when others were discovered buried in a field, about a quarter of a mile distant from the scene of his exploits, and the fragments of a feast were found. The 2 ducks which returned are getting over their hasty interment, but still bear the marks of their sexton's rough handling. Master Reynard yet continues his visits, but has been prevented from paying his respects to the inhabitants of the hen-house.

THE WISHING WELL.

VOICE of this region fabulous!
For silent else is all the air,
None else remains to tell to us
The story of the things that were.
Fair Fountain of this valley lone!
That falling with a ceaseless plaint
Into thy cup of sculptured stone,
Speakest of Fairy and of Saint.
For name of either thou has borne;
Time was Titania by thee played;
And rings by elfish footsteps worn
Still linger in the magic glade.
But when the Benedictine came
To build upon these meadows fair,
He called thee by a holier name,
And blessed thy source with book and prayer.
And whether it were Saint or Fay,
Blessing or magic—who could tell?
Men said that virtue in thee lay,
And loved thee as the "Wishing Well."
And still thy chalice carven of stone,
Though old beliefs have passed away,
Though Fairy and though Saint be gone,
Brims with clear crystal day by day.
And waiting here an idle while,
And looking with a listless eye,
I see beneath thy waters smile
The changeless azure of the sky—
The changeless azure flecked with gray,
That was as deep, as fair, as clear,
Or ever down the woodland way
The first wild savage wandered here;
Or ever man thy dwelling knew,
And, resting on the virgin sod,
Looked wondering on the imaged blue,
And blessed thee as the gift of God.
And, if there still be power in thee
To grant the wishes we conceive;
If it avail implicitly
The old tradition to believe.
Give me, fair stream—not gold nor love,
Not fortune high nor length of days,
Not force to rise the crowd above,
Nor the deceit of human praise:
But this—that like thy waters clear,
Through creeds and systems come and go,
Unveiled within a narrow sphere
My life with even stream may flow—
May flow, and fill its destined space,
With this at least of blessing given,
Upwards to gaze with fearless face,
And mirror back some truth of Heaven! —

C. A. L.

GEMS.

PERFORM a good deed, speak a kind word, bestow a pleasant smile, and you will receive the same in return.

WHOEVER would oblige himself to tell all that he has done, would oblige himself to do nothing that he would be anxious to conceal.

THOSE who reprove us are more valuable friends than those who flatter us. True progress requires either faithful friends or severe enemies.

BOASTING seldom or never accompanies a sense of real power. When men feel they can express themselves by deeds, they do not often do so by words.

THERE is a thread in our thoughts as there is a pulse in our hearts; he who can hold the one knows how to think, and he who can move the other how to feel.

IRISH MEDICAL STUDENTS.—It is stated that in nearly every one of the anatomical schools in Dublin the classes are larger than for many years past; the number of new entries, or first-year's students, like

those in this metropolis, is especially large, and among them is a lady student, who is attending lectures, &c., at Dr. Steevens' Hospital, who intends to apply for admission to the Preliminary Examination at the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland.

STATISTICS.

MINOR IMPORTS.—The minor imports in the Board of Trade monthly accounts "unenumerated" comprise a most miscellaneous collection of entries. In the year 1868 there was imported into the United Kingdom, 22,738lb. of human hair, or the computed value of 9,092l., and this was in addition to hair "unenumerated" of the value of 43,097l., besides goats' hair and camels' hair. Only one ass was imported in the year, and one mule; but there were 32 goats. As many as 21,024,124 goose quills arrived, and slate pencils of the value of 13,052l. The list shows an import of 40lb. of hats of bast, cane, or horse-hair, and 1,490 hats of hair, wool, or beaver; hoods of cattle, of the value of 4,273l.; 5,328lb. of leaves of roses; 32,976lb. of down; 506,653 bamboo canes, and 86,993 walking-sticks, mounted, &c., besides 4,623,046 canes, or sticks, not specially described; 261cwt. of casts of busts, statues, or figures arrived in the course of the year, and 9,602 oil paintings. The list includes 3,875lb. of chloriform, 118cwt. of caviare, flower roots of the value of 38,272l.; plants, shrubs, and trees of the value of 38,317l.; one ton of ore of gold, of the value of 332l.; precious stones of the higher class, 15,608l.; and of the inferior class, 14,530l.; besides unenumerated jewellery of the value of 68,684l.

MISCELLANEOUS.

FEAT IN TELEGRAPHY.—The whole of the speech of the Emperor, on the opening of the French Chambers, was transmitted from the Bureau Central in Paris to the offices of the Submarine Telegraph in Threadneedle-street in fourteen minutes. Five wires were used.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE THAMES.—The Thames conservators have given notice of their intention to apply to Parliament next session for powers to widen, deepen, and improve the river Thames and its tributaries, to remove bridges, regulate the discharge of sewage, and to levy taxes to carry out these works.

THE TRAMWAY BILLS FOR THE ENSUING SESSION.—Amongst the numerous "miscellaneous" schemes projected to come before Parliament during the forthcoming session, at least 25 tramway bills for London, the suburbs, and the provinces, will be lodged in the private bill office of the House of Commons by the 23rd of December.

BRITISH COLUMBIA is, it appears, to be included in the Canadian Dominion, which will then stretch across the continent from ocean to ocean. The colonists are not disinclined to the change, but are anxious, according to Governor Seymour's despatches, for local self-government, sharp retrenchment, and some help, or at least sympathy, from the mother country.

ENORMOUS HAUL OF HERRINGS.—One of the Yarmouth luggers, called the New Lily, belonging to Mr. Robert Nockolds, was towed into the harbour recently with the immense quantity of 25 lasts of herrings on board, which were caught off the Norfolk coast. As there are 13,200 herrings in a last, the cargo of the New Lily amounted to 330,000 fish.

THE ARBITRATORS of the London, Chatham, and Dover Company, Lord Cairns and the Marquis of Salisbury, have made much progress with the arbitration referred to them for the rescue of that gigantic concern from the contests of its sectional creditors, and are understood to have already disposed of the whole of the legal points, which promised in the courts of equity to drag on a protracted existence for the next seven years at least.

LONDON BRIDGE.—The carriage-way on London Bridge has been re-opened for public traffic. It has been repaved with new 3-inch by 9-inch Aberdeen granite cubes, with Guernsey guard stones. The length of carriage-way is over 1,000 feet, its width being 35 feet. No less than 105,000 stones were necessary for the roadway, and the weight of the material used in the work was close upon 4,000 tons. The work was accomplished in a fortnight.

STEAMBOATS on the American principle are to be introduced on the Lake of Geneva. Travellers by this line will have the further advantage of being permitted to leave the steamers at any port they choose, and continuing their journeys by rail, a mutual system of tickets having been arranged between the hitherto rival companies. The cause of this unwanted enterprise on the part of the Swiss capitalists is said to be the rumour which has reached them that a Scotch firm has been applying for permission to run steamers on the lake.

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- 2.—Good Night; Ballad, composed by Robert Guylott.
- 3.—The Dream-Land Waltz; composed by Walter Sidney.
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- 3.—Love's Power Cavatina, by Robert Guylott.
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MUSIC.

- 1.—Keep it up! Royal Twelfth Night Galop; composed by Karl Emilie.
- 2.—The False One; Ballad, composed by R. Guylott.
- 3.—La Tamborina; Valse Elegante, composed by Leonard Burrowes.
- 4.—The Kangaroo Polka; composed by G. A. Colma.

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- 9.—Kitty's Lesson. The Christmas Cake. The Eye. The Voice of the Stars on the Fashions. Hereditary Geniuses. Margie's Christmas Eve. Why Coffee is a Stimulant. Grand Meeting of Freemasons.
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- 11.—Clara's Masquerade; an illustrated story. Lillie Devoreux. Good for Evil. May Tudor.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

- 1.—The King of the Belgians.
- 2.—A Lecture on Matrimony.
- 3.—Left Alone.
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MUSIC.

- 1.—Die Jager Waltzer; composed by F. H. Brandon.
- 2.—The Merry Light Fandango; composed by Raymond Guillet.
- 3.—The Maha Rajah of Jeypoor; composed by Karl Emilie.
- 4.—Merry Christmas, a Song for the Season; composed by Mordaunt Spencer.
- 5.—Three o'Clock; Polka, composed by Walter Sidney.

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- 8.—The Forged Cheque. The Marquis of Westminster. The Stanleys, Earls of Derby.
- 9.—Caught in her own Trap. Chances of Marriage. Chester Cathedral. The Duke of Edinburgh at Japan.

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- 1.—The Empress of the French.
- 2.—New Blackfriars Bridge.
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- 2.—The Faded Flower; Ballad, composed by G. Robertson.
- 3.—The Haunt in the Highlands; Life and Fashion Waltz, composed by C. E. Grauville.
- 4.—When the Dews are Weeping; Ballad, composed by Fred Morton.

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